



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

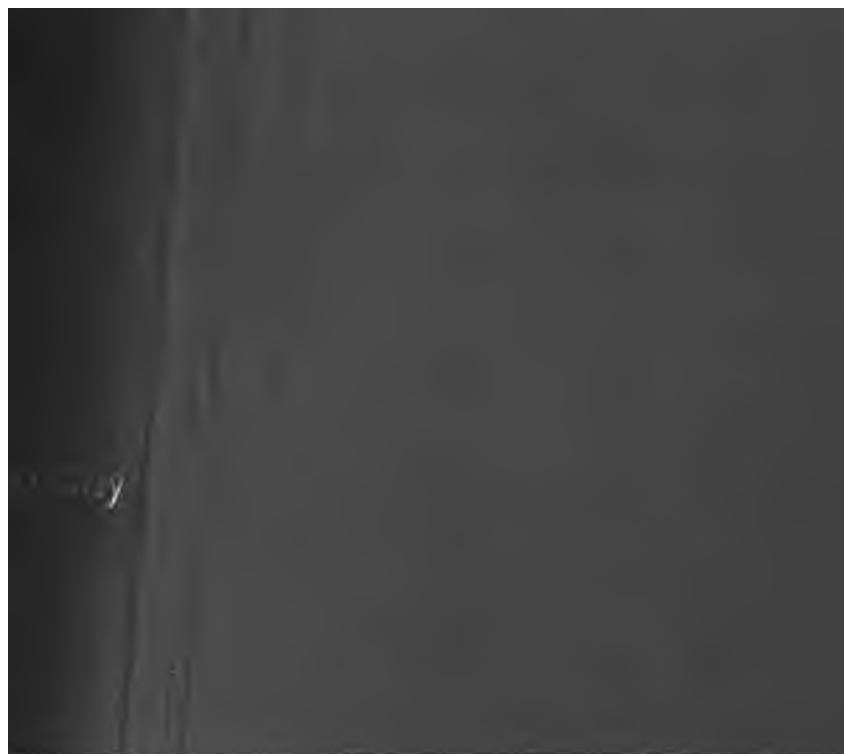
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

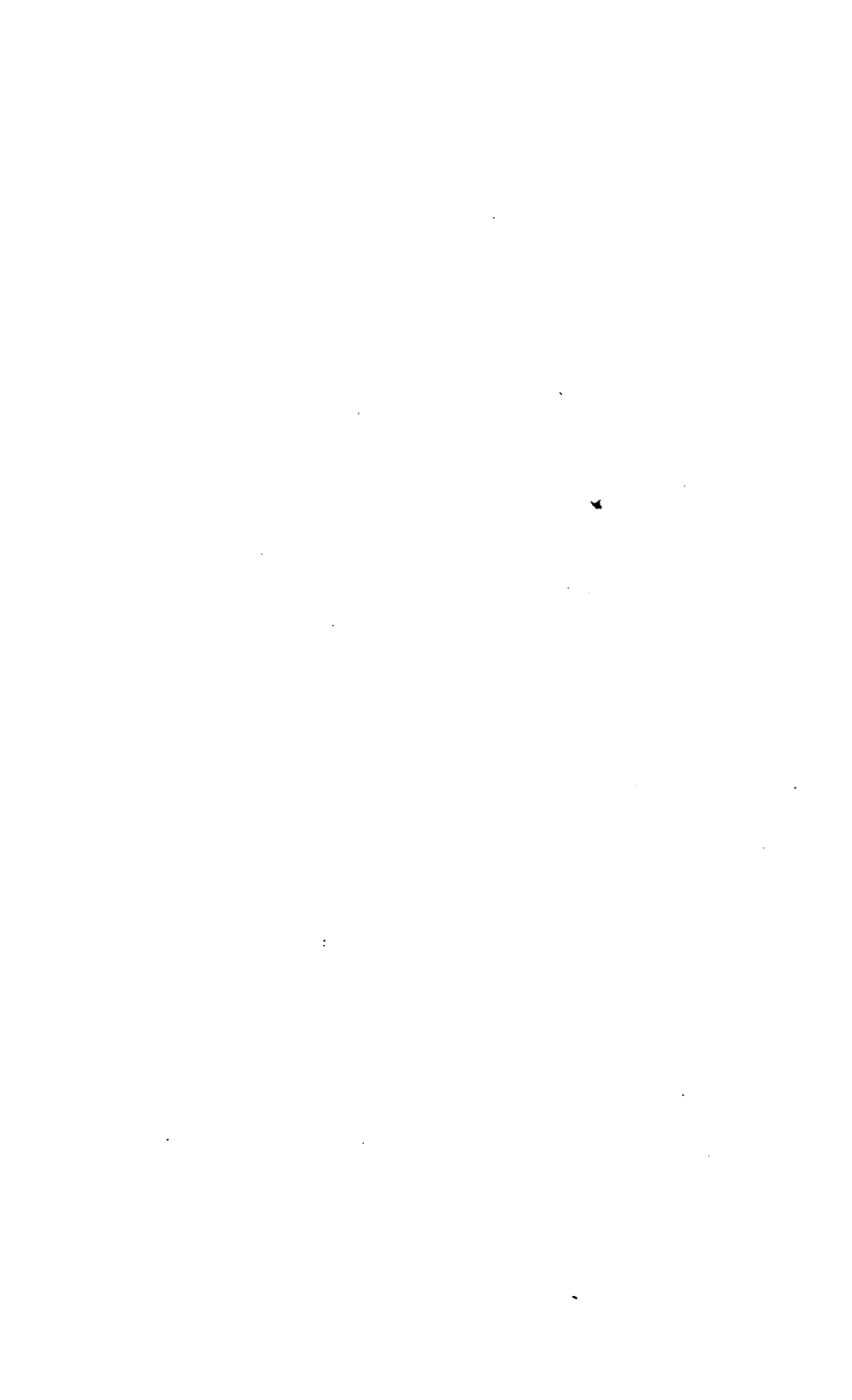


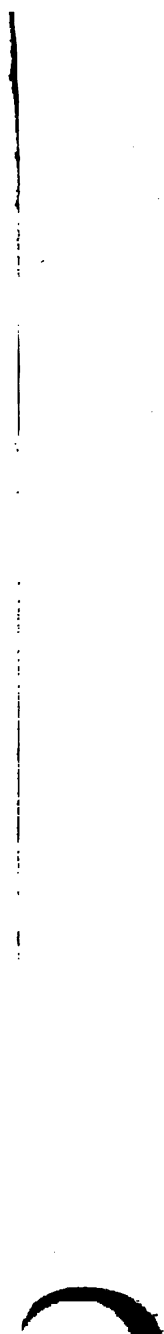




600060314K







ARMSTRONG MAGNEY.



ARMSTRONG MAGNEY.

BY

HERACLITUS GREY.



LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1867.

250. o. 269.
[The right of translation reserved.]



ARMSTRONG MAGNEY.

CHAPTER I.

“The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
Unaltered will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain,
Whose ever wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.”—*Shelley*.

PERHAPS the pleasantest hours of the pleasant week at Hamerton Parsonage were the hours of Monday morning. The good rector permitted himself then the longest rest from his active parish duties. The pulpit engagements were just over, leaving a sense of fatigue very slightly marked, and generally, less slightly marked, a sense of

satisfaction that was humble and devout enough, doubtless. And the various duties of the week, to which the rector gave himself with most unsparing assiduity, were not yet commenced. 'Twas a little lull in the parsonage activities, a pleasant and not unneeded breathing-time. And the week's engagements began so agreeably too. It was the rule that the two curates should spend an hour or two with the rector every Monday morning, when they talked over Church affairs, their new mission-chapel, the Sunday schools; consulted about the formation or improvement of some benevolent society, or reading-room, or workmen's club; or, maybe, remarked on the attendance or absences at church; the conference generally ending with some plan for the special work of the week.

To Mrs. Clayton, possibly, the Monday mornings made very little difference, for all days were as much alike, and as monotonously delightful, as days are likely to be to a comfortable, gentle-hearted woman, whose largest anxieties were about the number of drops of pulsatilla or nuxvomica to be given to her poor and very grateful patients.

But the daughter was not quite so indifferent. The Monday morning was almost as special to her as to her papa. For two extra seats were always placed at table in the bright, pleasant breakfast-room, and the flowers in the glass stands were always more carefully arranged that morning, and Miss Clayton looked, if possible, more fair and charming than usual. One of these extra seats was always occupied, for George Onslow, the new curate, never failed to come; but, once in three times, perhaps, Mr. Magney did not come till breakfast was over, and the Reverend Augustus Lane Clayton had withdrawn to the study with Mr. Onslow. Privately, Miss Clayton did not consider these Mondays pleasant. It was slightly provoking that Mr. Magney should want to study so much, and visit the people so much, and ride so much, that he could not always spare the whole Monday morning.

On the present bright April Monday morning, the prolonged breakfast had at length been concluded without Mr. Magney making his appearance. As the rector and Mr. Onslow moved to the study, Miss Fanny made up her mind to

happen to be crossing the hall just as Mr. Magney arrived—if she felt courageous enough. But a full hour passed, and she had no need to test her resolution.

By that time, in the study, Mr. Clayton was giving some parting directions to Mr. Onslow. “Then you’ll call and see why Gregson was not at church; and please bring me word in the vestry to-night how poor Mrs. Andrews is. By the bye, what a capital voice that little dark-eyed boy of hers has!—he might well be trained for the choir, I think; and you will take the mission-service next Wednesday?”

“Oh yes, with very much pleasure; and I will be careful to attend to all the work you have honoured me with,” said Mr. Onslow, rising to go.

“There is a vast deal to be done in the place before it will be all Christ’s kingdom,” the good rector said, in the earnest tone most common to him. Then, in a moment or two, “How strange it is Armstrong is not here! I do not think he ever failed to come on a Monday morning before. Perhaps he has gone to see the progress of his

church, and has been detained by the builder. I hope he is not ill." There was a slight anxiety in the rector's tone. He fancied that Armstrong Magney had not looked perfectly well of late.

"I should very much like to consult with you on a matter of some delicacy," Mr. Onslow said, after a short pause; "and you are too good, I know, to think it presumptuous."

"Oh no, my dear Sir; pray, what is it?"

Mr. Onslow seated himself again, and began. "It is not necessary for me to make any profession of the deep regard I feel, with yourself, Sir, and every one else, for Mr. Magney. But this profound esteem only makes me the more solicitous about him. I feel it may be an impertinence, my speaking to you of what you already know, doubtless, far better than I do, yet in good conscience I must speak."

As the good rector simply inclined his head, and looked slightly puzzled, Mr. Onslow continued—"Some people are beginning to doubt whether Mr. Magney is orthodox. I trust there is no public rumour, yet, that might prove in-

jurious to the church, and detrimental to his usefulness; but frequently the people question me about this in the course of my visitation. But, doubtless, Sir, they have spoken to you much more freely."

"And what have you said to them, Mr. Onslow?" The rector's tone indicated the faintest amount of vexation.

"Oh! at first I simply negatived all such suggestions. I reminded them what a faithful clergyman he had always proved himself, and said that they must have misunderstood his meaning; not unlikely, I reminded them, as he speaks so fervidly, and without notes, and so might easily express rather inaccurately what he really intended. But lately, I confess, when I have heard his sermons, I have feared there was an unsoundness in them. But I defer to you, Sir; I am sure you will not mind me thus consulting you."

"Unsoundness in Armstrong! Do not suffer the thought a moment, Mr. Onslow. Would to God the clergy—all of us—were like him. Why, he has done more good in the town in these three

years than any of us in thrice the time. Think how all the poor neighbourhood near the church that is building for him has been transformed through his labours." Mr. Clayton rose, and walked up and down, and his tone as he continued showed deep emotion. He was now saying aloud what he had so often said to himself when the thought of the possible heterodoxy of Armstrong had presented itself to his mind. "I never knew a young clergyman like him, so zealous, so able, so unselfish. I could never get hold of the working men; but they crowd to hear him, not only when he lectures, but when he preaches. Till he came we could never get the able people in the congregation to take any personal interest in the poor, or in schools; and now lawyers and doctors help at our lectures, and ladies nurse the sick. God has a great work for this young servant of his; and surely it is impossible that God would let him wander into error. God may have taught him more truth than he has us, because he is more worthy to receive it. No; Armstrong cannot have gone wrong. Let us remember that much of our religious

phraseology, and of our doctrinal formulas, may be rather old wrappings of the living truth than necessary expressions of it; and if Magney's preaching has been singularly free of this for the past few months, surely we have felt its spiritual power all the more. God knows I have. His words pierce, and show the inner rottenness of our Christian pharisaism, and leave nothing for any of us but repentance and the grace of God. And his zeal grows; his labours multiply; not a Paul could be more incessant in all manner of work for others. No, no, do not fear, Mr. Onslow. God will not forsake his devoted servant. But if we do fear at all, let us pray for him; let us especially pray that the devil may obtain no advantage over him."

It was not in Mr. Onslow's nature to have a great deal of unselfish devotion, but at least he felt how beautiful was the enthusiasm of the rector for his young friend.

Meanwhile, a sharp, definite, well-known knock at the door, informed them that Armstrong Magney had arrived. Both were glad that something prevented Magney coming at

once to the study, for neither wished the prolongation of the morning conference in his presence. After such a talk, it would be pleasanter to see Magney alone; so thought the rector, certainly. Onslow was not quite so pleased that Armstrong had not at once come to the study, when he saw him standing within the open door of the drawing-room with Miss Fanny. Mr. Onslow simply bowed, and passed out at the hall-door.

Miss Clayton had found that she was not too timid to be crossing the hall as the servant opened the door for Armstrong Magney. So it was quite natural that she should advance to meet him, and say in a tone of some anxiety, "We hope nothing unpleasant has detained you so long, Mr. Magney; we were almost alarmed, for you never fail of your duty, and we think that is here on Monday mornings." The fair, soft-eyed girl wondered afterwards that she could have been so courageous.

"It was very good of you to feel at all concerned," Armstrong replied. "I knew Mr. Clayton would be expecting me, and though I

fail often enough in other duties, yet you know I never do in the very pleasant one of coming here on Mondays."

Miss Fanny knew far better than he did, how often he missed being present at breakfast.

"And then, to-day," Armstrong continued, "I hastened, indeed, as much as I could, and am not without excuses that I trust will be thought sufficient."

It was very pleasant to have Armstrong quite to herself a few moments. Most people liked to hear his clear, full voice, so low in quiet talk, and only loud and ringing in impassioned moments in the pulpit; and perhaps Miss Clayton liked to hear this voice better than most people. She made two steps within the drawing-room, saying as she went, "Papa feared you might be unwell this morning, after your hard work of yesterday; but you are so strong, you can work always and feel nothing."

She said this with a very frank smile, and very innocently. She often thought Armstrong was hard-hearted, though not to the poor, but she did not mean to express this thought.

“Yes, I am glad I am strong, else I could not do my work.” Armstrong took a step forward, and so stood leaning just within the door. “I felt a little wearied with yesterday’s duties, and so prolonged my morning’s ride. Indeed, I took a gallop over the downs to Kelsham; then, observing an unusual group in the village, I rode right on, and found that widow Gange was dead. Poor creature, her sufferings have been very severe; I could not feel sorry that they were over. However, the neighbours were making a great to-do, especially about little Polly, whom they thought of sending to the poor-house. Well, it suddenly occurred to me, that the poor-house that would every way suit best, was Jannings’s, in Paradise Row.

“What, the stone-mason’s, who gets so tipsy!” Fanny looked up with a puzzled smile. No one could help noticing how pretty she looked so.

“Yes, exactly. I believe in all sorts of wonders, and reckon life to be fairy-land.” Armstrong spoke more gaily than was his wont, and was evidently much amused at what he had

seen, or at his present narration of it. "Jannings is a good-hearted fellow at bottom, though a little rough in his way, and with a decidedly unpleasant knack of making his hand heavy when he touches his wife in a tiff. But one day at the church, I observed him fling down his mallet and chisel, and coax a plump little toddling rascal over to him by the allurements of some sweets, which he got out of the depths of one of his pockets. A fellow who keeps sweets to give away to children, ought to make a better figure in life than Tam Jannings does, I thought. And so the reason of his wildness flashed on me. The man is disappointed because he has no children, I concluded; and that is why his wife's tongue is a little sharp. The 'stringing pretty words that make no sense' to some prattling baby, would sweeten it. Well, to make sure, next day I managed an opportunity to talk about our schools, and the children, and to ask, 'Tam, did you ever have a little one?'—'One,' said he, 'and it died,' and his eyes grew dim. But I must apologize; what a long story I'm making."

"Oh, do go on," replied Miss Clayton, rather beseechingly, "I am so interested. So you thought of giving Polly Gange in charge to Mrs. Jannings?"

"Yes, I got the women presently to cease talking, and to make up a soft bundle of the child's few poor things; and then I threw them in front of my saddle, and held Polly on them as gently as I could, and all her sobs were soon hushed in the wonder of a quiet canter over the downs to her new home. She is only two years old, so she will soon forget her mother, and will love Mrs. Jannings instead."

Miss Fanny would have admired Armstrong's kindness and tact still more, if she had known how he had overcome the objections of Mr. and Mrs. Jannings, and that he had arranged to give them a few shillings a week for the child's support. Nearly all Armstrong's small private income was expended in similar ways.

Mr. Clayton came down with Mr. Onslow, and heard, in brief, the account of Armstrong's morning adventure from his daughter, before he re-entered the study with Mr. Magney.

CHAPTER II.

“You are always welcome, Mr. Magney ; I wish your duties and mine allowed us more time for friendly talk. With all that you read and observe, you must have a great deal to communicate.” Mr. Clayton was half intending to proceed at once to the difficult matter on which he had been talking with Mr. Onslow, and which he had long been wishing to speak upon with his favourite helper ; but some uneasiness of spirit prevented him commencing yet, so he struck into matters more indifferent.

“Will you not put yourself up on the couch ? You need a rest after your long ride. That’s where I try to think out my sermons when I feel

tired and weak. We are not all gifted with the faculty of instantaneous sermon-making, as you are." There was no suspicion of depreciation in the smile with which the rector said this.

"Well, you know, my dear Sir, that is where all reading and experience go; all just as naturally flows into sermons as the juices of the plant go into flowers, whether dandelions or dahlias. It is simply nature; but it is very convenient to me, for if I had to study each sermon long, I could not get through half my work."

"But do take more care not to overwork yourself. We really cannot spare you time to be ill. Now, is it right of you to take that Saturday-night meeting at the benefit club?"

"Oh, that is only relaxation to me; and the fellows like it. There were more than fifty last Saturday, and half of them, I suppose, would otherwise have been in the public-house. It's very easy; not work at all. I read Shakespeare or Shelley, or Browning or Tennyson, or perhaps a piece from Maurice or Carlyle, and then we talk over it. It is astonishing what clever re-

marks they make, too. It often helps my sermons. And you see how regularly many of them come to church now?" There was a very pleasant, bright glance of the eyes as this was said.

"Yes, you are always right, Armstrong; but don't be too eccentric. We are watched very narrowly, and may easily bring reproach on our sacred vocation."

Armstrong's countenance showed some emotion as he listened to this. The rector observed it, and quickly went on,—“I quite know you are as sensitive of this as any one, and do all that you do to bring honour to our sacred cause; but in larger or in smaller matters, any of us may make mistakes. And sometimes small errors, insignificant breaches of petty conventionalism, may bring results far from insignificant. Is it wise of you, Mr. Magney, to go into that workman's shed, and use a labourer's chisel?"

Mr. Clayton asked this with evident hesitation, but the other's countenance at once cleared, as he replied, "'Tis only early in the morning I do this, and quite rarely—and I need some muscular exertion, and it will so pleasure me to see pieces of

my own work in my church when it is done—and it so encourages the workmen, and evidently helps them to see that hand-labour is not ignoble, but that a man's soul can trace itself in the shaping of a medallion, or boss, or moulding. Why, some of the men will soon be artists in their work; and then besides, Sir, it is just thus that I get what hold on them I have, to raise them to better things than sottishness and infidelity."

One could not easily touch Armstrong anywhere without striking on some enthusiasm. Meaning, only too deep, filled all his life, and, to his eyes, filled all the world. The good, quiet, earnest rector often felt that three months of Armstrong's ardent life would kill him, and sometimes expressed his fears that Armstrong was consuming his life too rapidly. "What then?" Armstrong would reply, in his clear way; "I shall have burnt up some few weeds and some rubbish, maybe, and have melted some iron ready for others' shaping. My fire must blaze rather than smoulder. I can't help it."

Presently a neatly-dressed maid, Annette, tapped

at the door, and brought in a dainty *déjeuner* service with hot coffee. "Mistress thought Mr. Magney might not have had time for breakfast this morning, or be needing some refreshment after his ride."

"It is very kind indeed," said Mr. Magney. "I remember now that I did forget all about breakfast this morning. Polly put all thoughts of it out of my head."

Perhaps some other thoughts had helped to do this.

After discussing and settling various church matters, with considerable effort Mr. Clayton nerved himself to break to Armstrong the rumour of his heterodoxy. Once this charge meant rude persecution, imprisonment, death. It is not quite certain that, translated into the refinement of our day, it does not sometimes mean solitude deeper than dungeons, and flames fiercer than the stake.

With a peculiar expression of anxiety deep in the eyes, which was not quite so uncommon as Mr. Clayton would have thought, the young clergyman replied,—“Judged after the standard of popular theology, if there be indeed any

standard for notions so fluctuating and inconsistent, I am doubtless heterodox; but not, I venture to believe, if judged by our Church confessions and by the Holy Scriptures. Yes, the people are right who suppose that I do not believe that any of God's creatures will be lost for ever—abandoned by their Maker to hopeless woe."

"Go on," very gently said the rector.

"Oh, Sir, all my love to my fellow-men, and all my reverence for the good God, is shocked utterly at the thought that these miserable millions of souls, who cannot save themselves, whose lives here are so poor and painful, should be doomed to an endless existence of shame and woe. What a character the dread Being would have, who willingly brought these miserable creatures into existence, foreknowing that such would be their fate! Now, it seems to me that the whole revelation of God in the written word, and in the incarnate Word, is given to save me from such despairing thoughts. Forgive me if I speak warmly. On this subject I never speak yet, for I cannot control myself. Does not God

say in His word that He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; that He was in Christ, reconciling the world, and not merely a part of it, unto Himself; that God hath concluded all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon *all*; that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times God will gather together in one *all things* in Christ; that, finally, God will be all *in all*? This is what I want to have faith enough to believe. But, dear Sir, you know all this—you feel it all. I know, from some expressions in your sermons, and in our prayers together, that you prize this great hope. Is it not so?"

"Yes, yes, I do hope this, but not confidently. There are difficulties,—there are doubts. Many passages of the word of God glow with this hope, and our Church permits it. She teaches us that Christ died not only for us, but for 'all mankind,' and refused a permanent place to a fortieth article in which the everlasting perdition of the wicked was asserted. But the Church has never yet been ripe enough in grace to be entrusted

with the full perception of this doctrine, and, I fear, is not advanced enough yet. And it is a doctrine altogether dangerous for the world at present, and would be perverted to the encouragement of evil. 'Why should we abstain from sinning,' men would say, 'if we are sure to get to heaven at last?' Men must learn that sinning is hell, and goodness heaven, before the final salvation of all can be safely preached. And let us remember that God has not told us everything, and that His stewards are to use discretion in bringing things out of the treasury. The Lord instructed the people 'as they were able to bear it,' and hid many things till the right time came for disclosing them. Permit me to pray you to be prudent. Ill-advised speech may disturb many minds, and do grievous damage to the souls of the simple. Take care, my dear young brother. May God show you the truth, and make you wise. At least, defer all utterance on this awful and difficult subject till you are in your own church, and are responsible to no one but the bishop and God. It is only a few months. Do not let our closing relations be in

the least embittered. It would be too painful for me. I could not bear it."

The two men stood close together, hands grasped. No more could be said. Both were too profoundly affected. There are very big hearts beating under the close clerical garb, and their goodness is, perhaps, no more conventional than that of any other class.

As Armstrong slowly turned from the parsonage door, he thought, "I did not tell him all. I could not. But perhaps I shall never have to tell more, or not much more, to any one, not even to my own heart. God knows. God pity me! After all, shall I ever preach in my beautiful new church?"

CHAPTER III.

"I dared it! I drew mortals back to light,
 From meditated ruin deep as hell!—
 For which wrong I am bent down in these pangs
 Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,—
 And I, who pitied man, am thought myself
 Unworthy of pity,—while I render out
 Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand
 That strikes me thus!—a sight to shame your Zeus."

Prometheus Bound.

MAGNEY'S step was not particularly alert at first, as he slowly made his way homewards to his lodgings. But it presently became quick and elastic, and the habitual smile came hovering near to the lips which it became so well. There were ladies and washerwomen, and tradesmen and workmen, to be bowed to, or spoken with, as he passed down the streets; and the little children looking suddenly bright and dropping

curtsies, or pulling at their caps, as he came by,—why, 'twould have been absurd to have done anything but smiled at them, and have given them a bright word. Armstrong felt that he would have been a forcible reasoner indeed who could have induced any but the narrowest bigots in Hamerton to regard him as a heretic. Perhaps he should yet be incumbent of the new "All Souls," and preach in life and in words the beautiful power of practical Christianity, and show, too, that all the dogmas of the church could be lifted from vulgar contradictoriness to a higher region of philosophic truth. Yes, it might all be, for was not God good? So he pushed away his ugly fears, to make place for all his teeming plans of practical usefulness, and made his greetings very gaily as he passed down the streets. Armstrong was fond of keeping up all sorts of acquaintanceships, and of adding to their number. All these various people, with strong characters, or with good characters, or with none worth speaking of, he would like to study, to learn something of their mystery; and besides, he wished to care for them all as a true

pastor, and "win them over to Christ and to goodness," if they were not yet living the higher life.

Armstrong was so popular among all sorts of people, because, I suppose, he had a generous nature well-developed all round. He had the keenest sympathy with all the activities of the world. Art, and literature, and commerce, and social duties, were all sacred to him; and the only worldliness he preached against or strove against was the worldliness of self-seeking, that stood opposed in his mind to the essential spirit of Christianity, joyful self-sacrifice. His sympathies were wide enough to include all the world, certainly all the world of Hamerton. The young men greatly admired him. It was a fine thing, they thought, that a clergyman so zealous and self-denying should share so many of their tastes. Magney was one of the best riders in the place. When Captain Jermyn's mare threw the groom and broke his head, and no one would try to get on the high-blooded creature, Armstrong stuck on her for four hours on the downs one morning, and taught her to be gentle. There were not

many riders in Hamerton who would have trusted themselves on Armstrong's own horse. 'Black Prince' was full of fire, but obeyed Armstrong's lightest word or touch. He often assisted at the grooming, for it was one of his many whims that the horse of a good man should love him. Though it was not agreeable to his sense of clerical propriety to hunt, he sometimes took the bat on the large Hamerton green. "A clergyman," said he, "must get hold of the people, and so must show sympathy with them." And he handled the bat not badly. He was rather famous for running in at a ball, and taking a six-stroke; but he did not guard his wicket well, and seldom made a high score.

Last autumn he went with young Boutell, the banker, just away from Oxford, on a yachting expedition to the fiords of Norway, and had with cool bravery, and to the great admiration of Boutell, who was an excellent sailor, rendered very effective help on several occasions when the little vessel's life was likely to have been dashed out in the violence of sudden storms.

Armstrong had a great idea that a clergyman

should show "pluck," and prove that he was thoroughly a man. Perhaps, too, he did not greatly dread a fatal accident. A fling from a wild horse, or a wandering grave under the salt waves, was not so far from his mind. The past had been so full of the rush of a strong happy life, and the future now began to fill him with such dark presentiments of failure, that he would not unwillingly find an honourable end to life. And really he had already lived a long life in twenty-eight years. How little of all this did Boutell guess as they made the Alpine solitudes merry with their laughter last autumn; how little of it all could any one in Hamerton yet guess. And so we all mingle together, and think each other very understandable, and perhaps commonplace, while each life is a mystery, and perhaps a tragedy.

Armstrong passed down the old High Street towards the new part of the town. High Street pleased him much better than its wide, fashionable continuation, Broad Street, with houses all alike, with stucco fronts, and shops glittering with plate-glass,—the route leading near to his

church, and on to the railway-station. High Street was old and picturesque. There were one or two gabled fronts in it; the low first-floors of two or three of the old houses projected over the narrow pavement, and were supported on wooden columns. The houses were of all sorts and sizes, and some were set at inconvenient angles. Several houses of gentry and of professional men put in their quiet appearance, with dainty bits of garden, between old-fashioned houses of business. 'Twas more pleasant to Armstrong's eyes than the modern style of keeping all things in batches of monotonous similarity; batches of shops, with tradespeople all cast in one moderately excellent commercial mould; batches of semi-detached villas, inhabited by the same class of clerks; and batches of detached villas, by the same class of rising or retired traders. Armstrong was ready enough to allow the advantages of these and various other improvements of our prosperous civilization; but there was something in it that displeased him nevertheless, and so he had chosen his lodgings down a side street in the old part of the town, just where the fields began.

As he passed the handsome new-built premises of the old Hamerton Bank, and turned down towards his street, Alfred Boutell stepped out, and quietly slipped his arm through Armstrong's.

"You are going in? May I come with you? I want to see your friend's painting, which you said had arrived on Saturday."

"I shall be most glad, my dear fellow. I want to know if you can endorse my opinion of Harvey's work. How do you get on with the essay?"

"Oh, pretty well; they were astonished at home that I should give a public lecture, and to a lot of workmen. The governor did not half like it; thought it was lowering one's-self; but he says, if it's to oblige you, he don't mind. By the bye, do you know you compel the governor to spend an extra hour in office on Saturdays?"

"No; I can't guess your riddle."

"Why, he used to do a lot of his calculations, so he says, on Sunday nights; but since you have been preaching, he can only employ so profitably the mornings."

It was pleasant to hear Boutell's merry laugh,

and Armstrong would have been more than mortal if he had not felt some gratification. "But," thought he, "what's the use of my tickling old Boutell's ears, if I can't stir his heart?" But then he remembered his influence over the fine young fellow at his side, and not without some sense of awe reflected that he had saved him probably from a life of vicious extravagance.

The room into which Armstrong ushered his friend was a little remarkable. Three of the walls were hidden with well-filled book-shelves, except where a door let through into the bedroom. This one large room served Armstrong for library, and reception-room, and studio. An easel stood in one corner, but it held a finished painting in oils, partially covered up, not Armstrong's; he had no time for painting, except a little in water-colours, about which he only knew enough to appreciate the difficulties of making flat canvas flush with the colour and life of nature, and perhaps enough to know good painting when he saw it. In one of the windows stood a stand of flowers. The centre window had been enlarged, and led with doors into a

garden. The doors were usually open night and day. Between the windows were several oil-paintings, without frames.

Armstrong, with a touch of reverence, removed the covering from the new painting.

Boutell broke the silence. "By Jove, what a face! What concentrated force of endurance and scorn! Look at the passion in that clenched hand; the iron links can't tame it. And what fire in the eyes! Yes, Prometheus looked just so. But there was something of the devil in the artist when he painted that, or—"

"Something of God," quietly said Armstrong. "Every good gift is from the Father of lights, and my friend's gift is good, and very wonderful. God's light—the fire of goodness—should burn into every heart that feels the power of this painting. Does not the Scripture say that Bezael and Aboliab were filled with the Spirit of God, to devise cunning work in gold and silver, and to carve in wood? Surely as much are our artists inspired now, seeing that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Perhaps neither Armstrong's thought was rest-

ing on what he was saying, nor Boutell's attention much arrested by it. Often our meaning strikes right away from our words, and these hang loose with little apparent connection, and rather show what is not in our minds than indicate what is.

After a pause, Armstrong resumed. "The artist has chosen the moment of Prometheus's fearful curse,—his imprecation on might, that seemed supreme over good,—

"I see the curse in gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles."

"It is fearfully grand, and wild," said Boutell. "I hope you will part with this as with other of his paintings. Do let me buy it."

"Yes, presently, if you wish. Here's Harvey's letter. But I can't spare this for several months, till it is traced deep in my memory. This will always be an inspiration to me, and afford better help for my pulpit duties than would a thousand skeleton sermons."

Boutell read the note.

"My dear Friend,—Thanks for your cheque

“for eighty guineas. I hope you will not think
“the painting dear. I put my soul into it, and
“am sorry to lose it; and yet I am glad too, for
“I could not reach my ideal. Who does? I am
“sorry it was rejected at the Academy, for the
“criticisms on it would possibly have been amus-
“ing. But the other one I sent is admitted; but
“the subject is more commonplace, and more
“level with the capacities of the public and of
“the critics. It is not every one who has such
“a lucky genius as you to be profound and po-
“pular both. You were right. It is not easy
“for a young beginner like me to find purchasers.
“God prosper you.

“Your faithful Friend,

“ALFRED HARVEY.”

“You once said that Harvey had a history,”
remarked Boutell; “I can believe this now I
see his work. A man could scarcely get that
force without knowing something of the pains of
life.”

“His life has been all a trial,” replied Arm-
strong. “He was intended for the Church, but
found he could not believe enough to make the

subscription. So, to the indignation of his friends, he threw up his prospects, and gave himself to art. It has been a desperate struggle with him, but he is rising into notice now. He is a splendid fellow, and deserves all the success this world is likely to allow him. It is strange how the big world gains through our individual losses. He would never have painted such sublime passion as that Prometheus if he had not had to feel how good Good is, and mighty above all might. It is wonderful how for every high vocation the sons of God have to be made perfect through suffering."

As he could not have the Prometheus, Boutell bought one of the other paintings. It was one of Armstrong's whims to pleasure himself and serve his friends by keeping a bust, or group, or painting in his library a few months till he sold them, or gave them away. "I have no right to monopolize the beauty of these things," he thought, "and besides, after I have felt their inspiration for a time they cease to move me as they would others, and as other pieces of art would move me."

When Boutell left, Armstrong pulled down the blinds, and flung himself on his knees before the painting, and gazed long at it, till his eyes rested on visions far away, and then were lifted up, filled with tears, in prayer. "God, God! not Jove, but God! not Might, but Love! Lord of love, save the world! Pity our miseries! Take away our darkness, take away our evil. More light! more light! Not darkness; not error; O God! save me from error. Light! light!"

In all Hamerton that afternoon, perhaps, God's eyes saw no heart so dismayed and dark as Armstrong Magney's; in all Hamerton his name, perhaps, would have been fixed upon as the happiest and most enviable of mortals. So little do appearances correspond with truth.

When he rose from his knees he first crossed over to the book-shelves and reached down several English works, then unlocked a drawer in his desk, and sat down to study. From the drawer he drew out a number of books and bulky pamphlets of criticism on the Gospels,—Baur, Zeller, De Wette, Schleiermacher, Tholuck, Strauss. Just now he was engaged in a renewed investigation of the date,

authorship, and trustworthiness of John's Gospel. It was odd, perhaps, that first he re-read Brown-ing's piece on the Death in the Desert before he set himself to the task, but it suited his mind, and imparted a hopeful stimulus not unneeded. "If John's Gospel stands, then by this anchor my ship will still ride secure;" so Armstrong murmured. But sometimes the limitless ocean is the only place of safety for a vessel, and no harbour the only harbour. And, besides, are not ships made to cross the great ocean, and find new worlds beyond? Perhaps it was still reserved for Armstrong to say—

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

Only there are still shipwrecks on all waters.

He had still two or three hours for reading before starting for Cheltenham. His horse was ordered for four o'clock, for he always rode to his preaching and lecturing engagements, when they were not too numerous in the week, or too distant; and though Cheltenham was twenty miles,

he usually rode over for his health's sake, upon which he knew his anxieties were telling. Besides, fast trotting, with a good gallop, blew the dust from his brains, he thought, and generally enabled him to arrange a sermon.

CHAPTER IV.

“ And her face is lily-clear,
 Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty
 To the law of its own beauty.
 And a forehead fair and saintly,
 Which two blue eyes undershine,
 Like meek prayers before a shrine.”

Mrs. Browning.

MISS ANGELINA FANNY LANE CLAYTON seemed expressly designed by a beneficent Providence to be wife to some worthy clergyman ; so, at least, thought very many of the best informed people at Hamerton, who, like well-informed people everywhere, were rather ready to attribute their own contriving wisdom to Providence,—with commendable piety, I suppose, if not with much philosophy. And it is likely that her mamma and papa had the same thought about their fair daughter, and not impossible that Miss Fanny

shared that opinion, at least since the same designing Providence had thought fit to bring into the town one of papa's two curates. Why should not Miss Clayton share the general opinion? She did, usually, on all subjects, even if the opinion did not happen to be as personally pleasant as it was in this case. The girl was very dutiful, very good, very pious. And she could not help knowing this, and thought that a minister's wife, to be perfect, ought to have all these excellences, only, of course, in a higher degree. And then her looking-glass told her that she was very fair, and had very soft beautiful flaxen hair, and dainty cheeks, faintly flushed with apple-bloom, and pretty dimples, and eyes blue as violets, that could not help looking, at times, very tender and melting. But she did not let the looking-glass talk to her thus very long, for in her innocent little soul she wanted to be very good, and knew she must not encourage any thoughts of vanity. For then how could she be one of God's dear children?—and how could she deserve to be the wife of a *very* good minister? So once she even ventured to pray that she might grow ugly rather

than be vain ; but she only prayed this once, because she half-thought that then she might not be so eligible for wife to a very good minister. Some people may have thought that there was not strength enough of character in the girl,—“there’s no colour, no devil in the child,” Mr. Boutell one day remarked of her to Alfred, who said she was the prettiest girl in Hamerton. But then we don’t want deep colour in all flowers. And, at least, she would be the more likely to reflect the character of the good minister who should ever be so felicitous as to call this fair lily his own.

In her religion the good little creature was exceedingly anthropomorphite, and, with as much simplicity as ever Hebrew or Greek, fashioned the Godhead from man. Heaven, to her, was much such a place as Hamerton parsonage on a grand scale, only with no chair empty at breakfast, and with no poor hovels visible from the windows. The saints and angels were exactly such people as papa and Mr. Magney, if, indeed, all of them were quite as good ; and she knew what eyes they had, and with what rich low

voices they spoke. As she knew two such ministers as her papa and Mr. Magney, nothing could be easier for her than to believe most trustfully "in one God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord." All her faith rested in unquestioning simplicity, yet was, perhaps, rooted sufficiently deep for all the stress likely to be made upon it. Fanny's times of highest religious exaltation were the services on Sundays and on Feast-days ; especially since, during the last three years, the prayers had been read with such devoutness, and the choir had been so much improved,—though the rector had always taken pains that the choir should be good. In a very sheltered valley, where the dews fell thick, and the sunshine was very bright, this fair lily had developed with a very gentle and bewitching grace.

A day or two had passed since the little orphan Polly had been left at Mrs. Jannings's, and Miss Fanny thought it would not now be too soon to call. She liked visiting the poor, and was generally regarded by them as a gentle human angel, too different from their coarse

natures, vulgarized in the hard toil of life, either to be understood, or to be much confided in. They could not let her see their miseries, and hear of their sins and baffled struggles, as they could Mr. Magney. Miss Clayton preferred visiting in the morning, when the men-folk would be away, for though they were always respectful, she felt a little afraid of them, and did not well know what to say. But Mr. Magney timed his visits so as to see the men, and frequently called in their dinner-hour, or in the evening before or after lecture, except on tailors and shoemakers, who were always at home. So they rarely met at the houses of the poor, and when they did, Mr. Magney rose at once to go, or if Miss Clayton were already there, would bow, and make excuses, and promise to call again shortly. But Mr. Onslow "very much trusted that he should not disturb Miss Clayton;" and when it happened that he could leave when she did, it also generally happened that his way led in the direction in which Miss Clayton was next going.

Most frequently her mamma accompanied Miss

Clayton, but this time her maid, Annette, was going with her. On her visiting mornings, Annette dressed her young mistress expressly. A very plain merino dress, or in summer, a very simple cotton, without trimmings, and of most moderate dimensions, uninflated, a plain bonnet, and generally a lighter or heavier shawl, just showing a small white frill round the neck, was the usual visiting costume. There were other men in Hamerton who met her thus, who agreed in the sentiment of old Mr. Boutell, if not with the form of its expression, "Why the deuce can't the women dress sensibly like that? there would be a pleasure in looking at them then." His own daughters dressed rather extravagantly, and would reply with indignant alarm, "Why, papa, you would not surely have us make such guys of ourselves. It may be quite proper in a lady visiting the poor, but it would be absolutely improper in us."

Annette stood with a small basket open, and Mrs. Clayton gave some final directions. "You won't forget, Angelina, this jelly is for poor Mrs. Clark; she may be able to eat that, though she

has no appetite." Mrs. Clayton had insisted on having her child called Angelina, and had not the name been prophetic? Her husband ought to allow that, when she happened to have any opinion of her own, she was always right. The good lady, however, rarely used the name, except in her prayers for the child, and when she sent her on angel-visits like this.

"And these grapes are for the sick consumptive boy of Mrs. Simmons; and don't forget to inquire if he is careful to take the *dulcamara* and *carbo vegetabilis* in solution, alternately. Here are the bottles. Remember, two drops in a tumbler of water, a teaspoonfull to be taken every three hours, *alternately*, mind. And for Mrs. Jones's little baby I have put up some globules of *chamomilla*. Do you know, I am almost convinced that it is better to use globules for children. The medicine in drops is, I fear, too powerful for their weak little frames. Now, good-bye; God bless you, darling!" Mrs. Clayton kissed her daughter very tenderly, on the forehead, as if she feared to kiss off the faint bloom-flush from her cheek. "And mind you

don't stop too long; Annette, please take great care of Miss Fanny."

In the hands of Mrs. and Miss Clayton, homœopathy, with the aid of confections and fruit, and clean clothing, and sometimes a trained nurse from the hospital at Cheltenham, and always with a deal of delicate kindness, certainly wrought wonderful cures. May scepticism of Dr. Hahnemann's delightfully simple system long remain remote from the parsonages of our happy but too-questioning England!

In the course of the morning's visitings, Miss Clayton called on Mrs. Jannings, in Paradise Row; it was a narrow street of small rickety houses, the last street in the old part of the town, just where the new streets led on to the rear of the railway station. There was little of Paradise in the outer aspect of the street, except, perhaps, in the number of animals domesticated there. Ragged cats walked the tottering tiles, or snarled suddenly from the miserable areas; disreputable dogs, that would not have been tolerated elsewhere, found here a refuge, quiet from all ills except the pangs of hunger, and an

occasional maddening race, with resounding kettle at tail, and a horde of tattered little ruffians following with unearthly yells. A passer-by might then have been tempted to believe in the doctrine of the metempsychosis, and to imagine that in the dog was imprisoned the spirit of some murderer, who had not been sufficiently tormented by raging fiends of remorse and shame. For, as a dog, what could the poor beast have done to deserve such treatment?

Quite at the end, where there was a three-cornered piece of waste ground, a pig was kept by one of the oldest denizens of the place, who had thus succeeded in achieving his life-long ambition of some day having some sort of a farm; and a very ancient donkey dejectedly perambulated the broken roadway. The boys had long ceased trying to torment the poor brute, for they could get no fun out of her. She refused to run or even accelerate her pace, and would not even take the trouble to fall down. As certainly no reason could have been assigned by any one why she should fall on the one side rather than on the other, she, like the world to the astronomical

philosopher of old, and for the same identical reason, stood still. She had arrived at a period in her history, when it was as indifferent to stand against the brunt of adverse fortune as to fall under its force. So, except new arrivals or chance explorers, the boys ceased their thwackings of a beast that so perversely refused them the gratification of showing itself hurt. These same boys and their sisters were the animals that most abounded in this paradise, and that seemed the most wild.

“Rank, rotten weeds, fit only for the dung-hill or the fire!” said old Boutell of them one day, as he gave a subscription for them to Alfred. But they were flowers that might bloom more fairly than any Eden ever knew,—at least so Armstrong Magney thought. He had been arranging with Mr. Onslow to take one of the houses, and open it as a ragged-school. The street was in Mr. Onslow’s district.

Her visit in this street was not made by Miss Clayton without some trepidation. Very gravely she and Annette made their way to No. 27. There were times, as now, when human life

seemed a dark puzzle even to the simple mind of Miss Fanny, though the problems raised as she cast her eyes timidly from side to side of the way, were not precisely those that perplexed other brains—Armstrong's, for instance—as they thought over such scenes. “Oh, how strange,” thought she, “that the children like to play so much in the dirt! How strange that the women will be so slatternly; it must be hard for their husbands to love them! Why do they not wash themselves and their things? And some of them drink, and neglect their families; that's very wonderful. And the men drink, and so their homes are so wretched. Why do not they save their money, and have better rooms in the new streets, and send their children to school? Oh, dear! how miserable they are now. Why do they like to be so? And if not, why do they not alter? Perhaps they want showing how; but I can't do this; and even Mr. Magney can't alter everybody.”

With much trembling the kind little creature made her way down the rotten stairs of No. 27 to the back kitchen; two children from the

“parlour” rushing down before her, shouting, “Here’s two ladies, Mrs. Jannings, as wants yer! they’re a-coming down!”

Stumbling over the broken paving of the dark passage, the young girl and her maid found their way into a small low room, much overcrowded with rusty old furniture.

“You know, Miss,” Mrs. Jannings presently told them, “as we used to live in two rooms, ’fore things got so bad with us, as, please God, we’ll soon live in two rooms again, for Mr. Magney says he can’t let us have the gal if we can’t bring it up respectable in two rooms.”

Polly was far the brightest and cleanest thing in the place, and certainly did not seem any the worse yet for the change of mother and of abode. The plump little creature stood staring with big black eyes at the ladies.

“Come, bright-eyes, and let me see you,” said Miss Clayton, in a winning voice that ought not to have failed as it did, one would think. Perhaps Polly regarded the visitors with too much awe to stir, and felt it was safer to be seen at a distance. However, when Miss Fanny took from the basket

a piece of cake, and coaxed her with that, she forgot her shyness, and took a little kissing and petting as readily, but perhaps not so delightedly, as she took the cake.

But Mrs. Jannings was the most remarkable object in the place. She was a very little woman ; so small that no one would have guessed what a furious noise her tongue could make when she quarrelled with Tam, unless one had reflected what floods of sound thrill from the throats of very little warblers. Only Mrs. Jannings's noise was not song. 'Twas long since the love-cooings had ceased : you could not guess from her appearance how long. She might be almost fifty, or she might be less than thirty. She had one of those little, dry, hard-lined faces that age early in a troublesome life, but then remain rigid with their care-lines, and long defy time. Old Chronos neglects them, perhaps, in favour of more dainty morsels. Yet the woman might have looked not unpleasant if she had only washed well, and dressed neatly, and had a background suggestive of comfort instead of misery. And Polly, unconscious fairy, would probably work this transformation.

“ I begins to love the child, Miss ; I was afeard at first as it would be too much for me, as I said to Mr. Magney, says I, that was the blessed mornin’ as he brought it, a-gallop’in’ down the street with all the children a-flyin’ under the ’osses’ feet and a-hootin’, Lor’ bless the children, they is a nuisance. Oh, Miss, they’d worrit the life out of yer, if you was on’y to hear their goins-on, as how they calls out ‘little Judy,’ and measures theirselves up against me, as don’t know their betters as ain’t measured with inches but by a big heart as Mr. Magney says, God bless him, as is the wonderfulest minister as ever came into Paradise, not meanin’ any disrespect to your Pa, Miss, as is a good man like a saint, only he ain’t so young like, and don’t speak such simple words as Mr. Magney, as we can understand, us poor folks as ain’t had no learnin’, and beautiful words, very long, like in church, though they sounds very nice, Miss, as I ain’t a-findin’ no fault with your Pa, Miss, and Mr. Onslow, Miss, as God forgive me for mentionin’ of such a thing, yet they don’t seem to help us poor folks so much, as I hope I ain’t takin’ too great a liberty to talk so free,

Miss,——oh ! bless the child, there ! if she ain't tipped over the coal-box agen ! an' I shall have to wash her all afresh, as Mr. Magney says we must keep her quite clean, because she comes from the country, though what that's to do with it I can't guess, seein' as the country seems to me to be nothink but dirt, at least the fields is, and our road ain't nothink to it, but says Mr. Magney, says he, you would not like to be the death of the child, says he, oh dear ! as if I'd be a murderer, 'so,' says he, 'you must live in two rooms agen', and have a coal-box,' says he, 'as she can't tip over,' says he, 'nor yet tip into.'”

After infrequent pauses for breath the good woman soon resumed, for Miss Fanny had not the least idea what to say, and only hoped that her listening might do the poor woman some good. It seemed very gratifying to Mrs. Jannings to have a lady to talk to.

“ And Jannings is beginnin' to like the child, Miss ; he was doatin' fond of our little 'un as died, you know, Miss ; all our troubles began then, oh dear !” The poor woman whined very piteously, and would have been the better for a

good cry. " It seemed as though when it died as heaven was opened to it, and shut to us, as Tam used to say. And ever since Polly's been here, Miss, I've kept on bein' reminded of my little 'un, and so's Tam, Miss, only my little 'un was a boy and this is a gall, and mine had only a little light hair, and this has got lots of black hair, and mine was nothink but skin, Lor' bless you, nothink but skin and bone, and this is all fat, and mine was always a-cryin', as Tam said, becous the world did not agree with it, and this one never cries except when Tam and me has a row, and then don't she squeal, and we has to leave off sudden and 'tend to her, 'cos we don't want to be the death of her with convulsions, as Tam says. And I don't know how to blow up Tam unless I speaks loud ; I can't be angry quiet like, you know, Miss, as it comes very hard on me, but p'raps when she gets older she won't mind it so much, so I must put up with it. I've nothink but troubles. But if we lives in two rooms agen, maybe as things 'll get straighter. It would be more like old times agen. But Polly's a awful trouble, Miss, as you know what children

is, an' makes a deal o' work, so I ain't got time to step over to Mrs. Jones or even to Mrs. Swile, for as sure as my back's turned she's a-pullin' down the pots, or a climbin' into the chair as has only got three legs, and a-fallin' down, as I know'd she'd be a awful worrit, as I says to Mr. Magney that blessed mornin', says I, on'y them knows the worrit of children, says I, as have had 'em to nuss, says I."

Miss Clayton had selected from half-a-dozen nosegays in the basket one that she thought might please Mrs. Jannings. Most of her flowers when cut—some of the very finest—were destined to light up with unexpected beauty the mean abodes of poverty, and there give keener pleasure probably as they quickly faded, or even when their withered forms remained in the changed water, long past restoring by any stimulus of salt, like ghosts of old days and fairer scenes, than ever they could give in the brightest sunshine to the sunniest eyes. I don't know whether the thought of using her flowers thus was quite original to Miss Fanny's mind, or whether it had come to her in one of the chance illustrations of Magney's

when he preached a year ago on the text, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Mrs. Jannings was delighted with the simple present, and curtsied low as Miss Clayton bade her good-bye, and departed. "If you please, Miss, you must be very careful of the stairs, as they ain't very good, and wants cleanin', but now I've got Polly I can't find no time for no-think" (the stairs had not been cleaned since the flood from the water-butt came down last winter); "but next week we are a-goin' to live in two rooms agen, I hope, and shall be in the first-floor; so good-day, Miss, and much obliged to you indeed, Miss."

But for the perfume of the flowers—an incidental advantage of taking this sort of present to the poor—Miss Clayton would have been poisoned by the pestiferous air of the cellar. "Oh, Annette," said she, as they made their way rapidly along the street, "I cannot ever go there again; it's dreadful. How could Mr. Magney have found out the place, and have taken Polly there! Why ever do the people keep things so dirty, and keep the windows shut?"

"It is because they are altogether nasty people, Miss," replied Annette, in a tone of clear decision; "they are not at all like you. Their noses are not made the same, nor yet their tongues, nor anything. Else they could not bear it, and would grow better."

Annette could have fancied that her uncomplimentary speech had been overheard by a group of rough men standing at the post by the corner public-house, for at the moment they raised a loud lawless laugh as the mistress and her maid passed on the other side the way. It was only at some dull joke, but Annette rightly thought they were the objects of it. "Here's the pretty ladies come to make us saints," was all the fellow said, and then, with an air of deference that was not all assumed, he advanced across the road, saying, "Can I help you, ladies, to find any one? We know all who live down here." Annette was ready to cry murder! thieves! according to the best fashion in adventures in her weekly 'Journal;' but Miss Clayton hastily replied, "No, indeed, thank you," though she had but a dim idea of what he had said. As they hastened their

steps, the other fellows called out, "There, Bill! you've frightened 'em, you're so ugly."

Just then the Rev. George Onslow crossed at the end of the street; his appearance had never been half so welcome before. Miss Clayton was unmistakably glad that he happened to cast his eyes down the street, and turned to meet them. The simple glance of gratitude with which she accepted his offer to see her into Broad Street repaid him for a long anxiety, and fed his hopes for months.

CHAPTER V.

“Marriage is the best state for man in general ; and every man is a worse man in proportion as he is unfit for the married state.”—*Johnson*.

“Marriage is a desperate thing : the frogs in *Æsop* were extremely wise ; they had a mind to some water, but they would not leap into the well, because they could not leap out again.”—*Selden*.

ONE morning in this week Armstrong found in the small pile of his letters one from his brother and one from his mother. He opened, and read :
“My dear Strong,—Please accept enclosed cheque
“for two hundred guineas for your church. I am
“glad the people have taken up the matter so
“heartily, and that it is likely to prove such a
“success. When I am rich, I shall be glad to
“have a brother a bishop ; but I am afraid you
“will be too go-ahead and uncompromising for

“such preferment. I have added twenty guineas
“for your last new scheme, whatever it is,—a
“house for teaching big boys to cut their sticks,
“or little ones to cut their teeth. You see I am
“just the same wild fellow I used to be. I can’t
“help being full of spirits. Everything prospers.
“What a fortune you would have made with
“your clever dash, if you had not given the af-
“fairs over to me! That new opening you made
“so capitally in the Java trade must of itself
“bring in a fortune, if I am not a fool and let it
“run somewhere else. But trust me. I have
“pretty Effie to make a fortune for now. We
“are to be married in six months, you know,
“when she is of age. I send you another photo-
“graph; the tint of the eyes and cheeks is right,
“but her hair is not so dark as it looks here.
“Is it not pretty? When you write, tell me
“frankly; only if she does not exactly please
“your difficult eye, please don’t say so. She
“will charm you amazingly, I am sure. You
“must like her. She is very religious; at least
“she always looks very good at church. But
“she don’t talk much about it. That’s all the

“better. I tell her she will be marrying a deal
“of religion because you are my brother. Then
“she quietly says it’s quite enough to marry me,
“as if ‘sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,’
“and I wanted her to have two husbands. Good
“bye. Whenever you would like a cheque for
“any object, do let me have the pleasure of send-
“ing one. I suppose you are laying up treasure
“in heaven as fast as I am on earth. Well, no
“doubt I shall be religious too some day; and if
“not, we will be brothers at the Day of Judg-
“ment, and go shares. You shall have half my
“money, and I half your goodness. That is a
“bargain, mind. Good-bye, dear old fellow; it
“always does me good to think of you.—Your
“merry, and lucky, and most loving brother,
“FREDERICK.”

The other letter was shorter. Mrs. Magney, like most elderly people, liked writing far less than talking.

“My dear Son,—I shall be spending Monday
“next at the Ellises’, at Cheltenham, on my way
“back to town to Harry’s. So I shall come over
“on Tuesday morning to assure myself that my

"dear Strong is well. Please meet me at the station. I leave here by the 11.15 train.—Your most loving Mother."

On the morning indicated Armstrong met his mother, made a number of calls with her, and then brought her home to lunch. They were to dine at the Claytons', and Mrs. Magney was to stay the night at the parsonage, if she would so oblige them. So came the invitation through Armstrong, and was accepted.

"I am pretty well satisfied with your looks, my dear boy," said Mrs. Magney, kissing her son on both cheeks as a preliminary to taking her seat in his study, "only you are a little careworn. You have been working too hard, and reading too much. I shall prescribe a remedy."

"I will try to be obedient, mother, especially if the remedy is to my taste. Please don't let it be a punishment."

"No, indeed, I will not."

"The remedy is—?"

"A wife."

"Worse than the disease," broke in at once Armstrong, laughing gaily. "I am a little worn

with the anxieties of my work, have an income strictly limited, and you would have me encumber myself with the care of a wife, and enter upon the woeful experience of housekeeping, until, eaten up with cares, I should find some Sunday morning that there was nothing left of me but my sermon-case."

"Seriously," rejoined Mrs. Magney, "you want a wife."

"Seriously," replied the son, "I don't."

"Your poor father married before he was your age."

"And he never regretted it," put in the son, "and, mother, when I marry I want it to be where I shall find no place for repentance."

"Well, dear Strong, you ought to be looking out. You can choose a wife beautiful and good, and all that you want, though perhaps you will not easily find any one better than you deserve. You know I am always very proud of my boys. I do not think the ladies here ought to have permitted you to be free so long."

Mrs. Magney was a woman of extraordinary directness of speech. Indeed her frank candour,

on which she rather prided herself, would have been quite intolerable sometimes but for the spirit of evident goodwill, and voice of extreme gentleness, in which she always spoke.

She resumed in a very earnest tone, "Really you ought to have a wife by the time you enter on the new living. There are all sorts of things in a clergyman's duties, you know, in which he can only be properly helped by a wife. Or even if she can't help, it is a great safeguard to him, and a defence against gossip, to have one. A good clergyman, if he is not bad-looking"—Mr. Magney's eyes flashed rather brightly—"is worshipped rather too devoutly by the women, even if he is married, and much too warmly by the maidens if he is not. My dear boy, there is no one else to look after your well-being, so forgive my plainness."

"Dear mother, you are always good and thoughtful. I feel the force of all that you say. I have said it to myself a hundred times, but what can I do?"

"Do? why marry some good girl. There's Miss Jameson, only she's a little too old; and your cousin Lilly, only she's a little too young;

and fair Rosamond, as you used to call her, only she is not fair. It will be easy to choose. Why, what a lot of marriageable girls there are here ! There are the banker's daughters, splendid creatures, not too fine, perhaps, for a parsonage. And the daughters of Lady Aldbury, only they are not very fascinating ; but you know them all better than I do. You have an excellent selection. And, above all, there's the rector's daughter, the loveliest girl of the fair style in the county, and good enough to be wife to any clergyman."

" Yes, mother dear, but I don't love any of these. I have had so much else to fill my mind that I have not cared to think about marrying."

" But, Strong, I am explaining to you that this is a matter of too great importance in your position to be left any longer in this indifferent fashion. You ought to love a woman, and so you would if she were fit for you. You would love Fanny Clayton with all your heart in a month."

Quite afresh Armstrong felt the painful peculiarity of his position, so far more critical than his mother could guess, or than he cared to hint to her. He felt he could never ask any of these

women to share the shame of a heretic clergyman. As it became the more probable that he would presently find himself cut adrift from his old friendships, it was the more necessary that, should he marry, his wife should be able to sympathize to some extent in his views, if he had to give up all his hopes in life for Truth.

Armstrong contented himself with saying, "But it is not possible my mother would seriously advise me to marry a woman for whom I have not the smallest affection?"

"No, indeed, I don't say that. It might be a great sin. You might love her afterwards, but it would be a great risk. You are only mortal, and you might love another woman when you were bound. But I think you could love now if you allowed yourself to do so."

"Mother, I think not."

"As soon as I have got the house all furnished and settled, and Harry married, I shall come here and look after you."

"Do, mother," said Armstrong, with a smile, closing up the conversation with a kiss.

That evening Mrs. Magney observed Miss

Fanny very specially, and also came to the conclusion that Providence had formed her expressly to be the wife of a good clergyman, and moreover that, at present, with a wilfulness that had often perplexed her in Armstrong, he was flying in the face of Providence by not loving the lovely Angelina.

CHAPTER VI.

“The tongue trips, mind droops, eyes stand full of water;
Noise, hiccough, brawls, and quarrels follow after.”

Lucretius.

“There shall never be one lost good; what was shall be as
before;
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
more;
On the earth the broken arcs, in the heaven the perfect
round.”

Browning.

THE next Saturday Tam Jannings made his way to the “Crown,” to pay off his old score. The dark-eyed little fairy had been in his house less than a fortnight, but already he began to feel that home might become a much happier place than the “public,” and that to make it so it was worth while to spend much more of his earnings on domestic expenses. On Monday they had moved from the kitchen to the first-

floor, and once again enjoyed the luxury of "living in two rooms." As Tam Jannings put down on the bar-counter the full amount of his arrears, Mr. Clut, the publican, looked rather strange at the big, long-bearded fellow.

"Ah, Jannings, you have had a stroke of luck, I suppose?"

"Two strokes of luck," replied Jannings; "first in order, I have had a lot of overwork, and that's how I can lay down the thirty bob; and first in consequence, my home's getting to rights again, so maybe that's the last score I shall ever owe you."

"Well, Tam, you will always be welcome to the best of liquor, and as much of it as you like, whether you choose to pay for it or have it on credit. What are you going to take now?"

"What are you going to stand on clearing up the old score?"

"Draw Mr. Jannings a pot of the best double, and dowse some warm coddle in it!" cried out the landlord to the barmaid.

Tam sat down at one of the side tables, and began drinking with some companions. In about an hour he started up.

"You ain't going, Jannings!" said one or two of them.

"You ain't so mean as to go, surely!" echoed the publican, who was standing near, and had been watching Tam.

"So mean! damn you, what do you mean?" roared the big mason. "I may do what I like with myself, I suppose. I ain't your slave, I reckon. I'll come again when I want some drink, if you serve me well; and if not, I'll change my money somewhere else. What are you staring at me for, like a fool?"

"No offence, I hope, Mr. Jannings, only we'd be sorry to lose you, for you've been a pleasant customer here, and we don't like to hear of a parson getting round a fellow, and wheedling him off to a Benefit Society."

"You have had a pretty penny of mine with your damned wheedling ways, Mr. Clut; but I never heard that it was either law, or gospel, or Act of Parliament for a man to keep on ruining himself for the sake of a publican and a sinner,—I mean for the sake of Mr. and Mrs. Clut, but it's all the same."

Knowing the antecedents of the lady, the select company could not refrain from a roar of laughter. But those who were in debt to the publican soon moderated their merriment, out of prudence. But the publican felt it was quite to his interest to pacify, and not further to irritate Tam. It was Mr. Clut's rule, a golden one he thought it, to do whatever his interest demanded, however low he might have to stoop. It was believed that he had first got set up in business in a small way by a gentleman, on condition that he married the very stout woman who rejoiced in his name. She was none the worse, he felt, for the arrangement, and he was the better off. Ever since then his good fortune had been increasing, apparently in proportion to the increase in the bulk of his wife. She was as big now as half-a-dozen men of his size, and afforded a magnificent expanse on which to exhibit in yellow or green silk the evidence of his prosperity.

"I am sure I beg your pardon, Mr. Jannings, if I said anything to offend," said Clut, in a cringing tone. Jannings was the best joker and speaker who came to the "Crown," and was

regarded even by the publican with considerable awe. "I hope I shall see you next week, and it will give me pleasure to draw my best for you."

"Well, good night," replied Jannings; "I am sure I don't owe you or any man any grudge,—in that respect anyhow I always pay as I go."

"But I owe a good many," thought Clut to himself, "and I wish I could pay 'em."

The little man went into the parlour to his enormous wife, and began his grievance. "I consider it a crime, Mrs. C.; between ourselves, I consider it sacrilege in a clergyman serving me so shabby."

"Clergymen! the devil! what do you mean? What have we got to do with clergy?"

"It's them as have too much to do with us, Mrs. C.; he may be the devil, as you say; I don't know; but we call him a clergyman; but maybe it's all the same." By this application of Tam Jannings's expression, it seemed to lose its peculiar painful sting to himself. "Mr. Magney has been 'ticing away our best customer."

"What, Corporal Tight?"

"No; curse the dirty foppish fool!" said the publican, with a sudden access of a sort of jealousy. "How these beastly red-coats get into a woman's eyes! No, I mean Jannings."

"If you can't speak more proper, Mr. Clut, I must desist on your addressin' those elegant remarks hexcludingly to your own breast." This was said with as much of the air of a fine lady as Mrs. Clut could command in so close an atmosphere on so short a notice.

"You talk about being proper, you mountainous hussy! Ah, I ought to have knowed better, seeing as my father's a Scripture-reader, than to cast pearls at swine." This misquotation exhausted Mr. Clut's Biblical knowledge. So saying, Mr. Clut banged his little form out of the small room. The king went to his counting-house to count up all the money. The queen stopped in the parlour to eat his words of honey.

The man's indignation grew rather warmer when he found that the evening's business was not so brisk as usual. He felt himself generally hard done by, and would like to have vented his spite somewhere, if he could have done so with

perfect safety to himself. Presently, in a lull in the business, he went to seek the ready sympathy of the barmaid.

"It *is* a vile shame," said that young lady, "Mr. Magney stealing away your customers. You don't try to steal away his customers from church."

"Robbing me of the bit of bread out of my mouth," continued Clut; "when I had to give twelve hundred pounds for the house, and pays such a rent."

"Well, the parsons can't ruin you, that's a comfort, while the men have got such stomachs."

"Maybe not; but I don't like having the bread taken out of my mouth; and the house placed so well, too, with the railway near in front, and the church building at one side, and up the hill the hall restoring, and the thirsty back neighbourhood." It was with some idea that the situation of his new public-house was quite pre-eminent, that Mr. Clut had given it the name of "The Universal Crown." Unless, indeed, he had some deep unconscious persuasion that drink, beloved of gods and men, was ruler



over things human and divine;—or that the frothy nectar he sold, alone having the power to make the wretched “remember his misery no more,” was for such a world as this the universal crowning mercy.

“That twelve hundred was a good bargain,” Clut continued, “if the rascally parsons don’t come and spoil it. I wish we could show them their interference ain’t agreeable.”

“Why don’t you?”

“How can I, Jane?”

“Why, send a lot of ’em to smash the windows at the benefit meeting, and pelt Mr. Magney.”

“Ah, but I should get into trouble.”

“No, you need not.”

“My pretty Jane” was a smart, vivacious damsel, with quite “devil enough” in her. All the customers admired her brilliancy, and thought that those who were permitted to do a little flirtation with her—that is the good customers who paid well—were the most enviable of mortals. She was really the mistress in the “Crown.”

“The men are drunk enough for a spree, now,

and Swile would lead them on. He don't mind getting into prison if it comes to that, because it is more of a home to him than his own, he says."

"But I should not like getting into prison. It would rub some of the guilt off the 'Crown.'"

"Not unless they could stick the guilt on to you. There's no fear. Have Swile into my parlour and arrange, and I shall be the only witness; and I will swear that you urged him not to be up to any larks, and swore he should never enter the doors again if he did. And when they are leaving, you can call out, loud enough for the potboys and Mary to hear, 'Whatever are you all going out for? Is there a fight?'"

So it was arranged, and in half an hour a lot of half-drunk wild fellows were on their way to the National schoolroom.

That evening Armstrong had been reading some of the fine passages in Ruskin's 'Lamp of Truth.' The men had discussed very shrewdly the bearing of Ruskin's principles on their own work, on lawyers' duties to clients, and on the profession of religious creeds. Tam, whose big form was near the door, had made his first re-



mark there to the effect that the 'Lamp of Truth' would have a result, perhaps, exactly opposite to that of the wonderful lamp of Aladdin, upon the rubbing of which there sprang up palaces of gold, for Truth, Tam suggested, would take the shine out of everything, and leave the world like a theatre-scene in the morning, with all the gold rubbed off, and the mean edges of our real existence showing through.

A number of keen eyes were fixed on Armstrong, to see what he would reply.

"Yes, it would be so," said he, "if a mean God were the author of the actual truth of things. The question is, are we greater and better than the hidden truth of life, and than the God from and in whom all flows,—and so lend from ourselves the glory which appears in nature and life? Or are we the debtors, receiving only in part the perception of the actual truth of things, which may be altogether good and fair when fully known? I wish I could speak it plainer. It might be put thus—Does our ideal transcend God's ideal, or his ours? I suppose our answer is likely to be Mrs. Browning's:—

“Truth is large; our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame to stand in his creation
And doubt Truth’s sufficiency;
To think God’s song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling.”

Or let me put the question once again. Is it the light, or the darkness, which would disappear before the full shining of the Lamp? If we knew the truth concerning God and Man and Nature, should we find that goodness was only fiction, or that it is the evil that is transient, and apparent only, though it is so real to us?”

“That’s fine,” said Tam; “you put it strong, Sir. It would be easier to live right if we believed that.”

“Good God, it would indeed!” thought Armstrong within himself. “I wish I had not so many doubts of it. Yet surely I do believe it.”

During the last few minutes his ear had caught the sound of approaching steps. The noise grew louder and louder, and discordant cries rose on

the air, and then came suddenly a shower of stones smashing through the windows. The men sprang up from the benches in some alarm, not without a few oaths—some of them being hurt by the stones. A rush was made to the door, which Tam at once dashed open. Armstrong sprang into the doorway first, and seeing in the wild group outside many workmen's jackets, at once cried out, in tones loud with excitement, "Friends, why come with stones? Give us words first! Stones break bones as well as windows."

"We mean to break your bones, you black-coat robber," cried a voice, and a stone was flung straight at the young minister; but which Tam caught on his uplifted arm.

"Then I'm willing to be a mark," cried Armstrong. "For which of my good deeds do you stone me? Where's the man who can say I've injured him, or any woman or child in Hamerton?"

"Hear! hear!" cried a lot of friendly voices of the society men, who had got out of the room, and were making a sort of body-guard round

Magney. And some of the beery voices cried, "He speaks fair."

"You parsons are a damned lot of liars and cowards," shouted a shrill voice, somewhere in the crowd.

"Shame! shame!" voices everywhere cried. When he could be heard, Armstrong called aloud, "I challenge that friend, or any one here who thinks the same, and can use his fists. Make a ring, and I'll show him that parsons are not cowards!"

"Hooray! bravo! And you'd punish him, too!" cried lots of voices. There were very few who were not on Armstrong's side now, and one voice cried, "I say, parson, we would not have done this here job if we'd know'd what sort of a fellow you was—would we, mates?" There were loud cries of "No, no!"

"Then I hope we shall know each other better," Armstrong replied. "None of you need expect to hear anything more of this. Only I hope I shall have the pleasure of shaking hands with a lot of you next Saturday night at seven o'clock,—especially with the friend who declines



my fist." There was a good laugh at this; these big men are as easily pleased as children, if you take them on the right side.

"And perhaps some of you will think about joining the Workmen's Club. It is all managed by the men themselves, and the parson can't interfere in it. Good night!"

CHAPTER VII.

"I'm dead, I say.

And if, to save the child from death as well,
The mother in me has survived the rest,
Why, that's God's miracle you must not tax,—
I'm not less dead for that: I'm nothing more
But just a mother. Only for the child
I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and afraid,
And smell the flowers a little, and see the sun,
And speak still, and am silent,—just for him!"

Aurora Leigh.

THE next week, when Armstrong was about half through the sermon at the usual Thursday-night service at St. Jude's, he observed Tam Jannings suddenly enter the church, and hide himself in a pew near the door, keeping his head bowed between his hands until the service was concluded. Armstrong supposed that some trouble had brought him there, and unconsciously made an

application of his subject at closing to suit any one in perplexity or distress.

When he came out of the vestry, he found Tam waiting for him. "I've come round, Sir, to beg you to be so good as to call at our place as soon as you can."

"I will go at once. I hope nothing serious has happened," said Armstrong, observing a very dark shade on the man's brow. "Your wife is well, I hope?"

"Oh yes, Sir, thank you; she's getting along much better now, and Polly's doing well, too. But there's a poor wretched creature—"

"Well, tell me."

"She's in that horrible cellar where we used to be, but it looks like a grave now she's there. She came on Saturday night, and paid a week's rent in advance, and bought her child some milk and bread, and has scarcely moved or spoken since, but sits in the corner and moans. Good God! it's too pitiful. I'm a hard rough man, but I've been crying over her; and my missus is quite soft over her, too, and looks after the child and her, but she just says, 'Thank you; please don't trouble.'"

“Who is the poor creature? Where did she come from?”

“She came from the railway, and asked in the street where she could get the cheapest lodging. She don’t say where she has come from, but says she has come here to die. She is a wonderful beautiful sort of a woman, Sir, and I think a born lady, though her dress is bad.”

Tam took off his thick shoes in the passago before going downstairs, saying, “She starts at all noises, and looks so wild.” Tam tapped at the door of the back kitchen, and thought he was bidden to enter, so he gently opened the door. Armstrong had never looked on a stranger scene. The room was now absolutely bare, and the patched walls and dropping ceiling looked ghastly in the darkening twilight. In the corner, by the one broken cobwebbed window, a neighbour, perhaps Mrs. Jannings, had put a heap of rags the night the poor creature came, and on these the woman was now lying stretched at full length with threadbare unmended drapery, indicating, even in the dim light, a form exquisitely proportioned. The arms were thrown wildly back,

and the hands apparently clasped under her head; while over her neck and on the floor fell tangled masses of hair that gleamed with gold wherever a ray of light fell. The face was deathly white, the eyes closed, and the lips tremulous with low groanings. Every line and shade in the room, the form, the face, combined to make an ideal of utterest despair. At her side a child of a year old with head all curls, resting on her bosom, lay asleep.

The two men stood awe-struck. "Is it so 'strange,'" thought Armstrong, "'to stand in God's creation, and doubt Truth's sufficiency'?" 'Twas indeed like a ghastly grave, the place they stood in; a grave of hopes and 'happiness that could have no resurrection; alas! not a grave where misery and shame could be buried in oblivion.

A faint step outside, and again the door opened, and Mrs. Jannings came in with a cup of tea and a piece of toast. "Oh, Sir, we're so glad to see you, Sir, to ask what's to be done with the poor thing, and make her eat as she's starvin', I'm sure, as ain't had a bit of vittal this blessed

day." Mrs. Jannings spoke very low, and then went up to the poor woman, and touched her arm gently, saying, "Now, poor dear, here's a cup of tea as maybe'll refresh yer."

The lips groaned only deeper, and then parted to cry faintly, "Death—come !"

"Death is coming, and then life. Be patient a little longer." The woman started a little at Armstrong's low deep tones. She did not open her eyes, but the groaning was hushed.

"Be courageous to the end ; it is not far off, perhaps ; and do your duty to the last. You must eat a little now, for the sake of the child."

The right chords were touched. She opened her eyes, and gazed on the child with a wonderful expression of tenderness and sorrow ; then looked up at Armstrong. His soul was full of deep commiseration for the woman, and awe at her beauty and misery. She felt something of this as she looked in his eyes ; then she remarked his clerical dress, and drew herself up to a sitting posture, leaning wearily against the wall, at the same time very gently moving the little child, so as not to disturb its sleep.

"That's right," said Mrs. Jannings; "now try to sip a little tea as I ain't put no sugar in, 'cos it 'll refresh you more."

Tam told Mr. Magney that he and his wife had been preparing the room over theirs for the stranger, as it happened to be vacant; but that she refused to go to it, because she had only a little money, and could not pay the rent.

"But," continued Tam, "we can well afford the rent, and I'll be proud to do it, if she'll only let me."

The woman shook her head, and said faintly, "I won't take the money of the poor; I'll die."

Magney cast about in his mind for an expedient. "I have some money from the wealthy who want to do good. Pray permit me to pay the rent till you get better."

Her eyes flashed as she replied with emphasis, "I won't take the money of the rich; I'll die."

"But you will permit a lady who is neither poor nor rich, only good, to help you?—for the sake of the child; this close place will kill it."

As there was no positive refusal to this, Armstrong thought it well to consider the matter as

so decided. He motioned to Mrs. Jannings to pick up the child; then, as the woman rose to her feet, observing that she staggered from weakness, he quietly drew her arm through his own, and, aided by Jannings, slowly took her up the stairs to the room on the first floor. Then, giving Mrs. Jannings some money to use for her, he left them.

Strong pity for the miserable creature, and a faint hope that he might be of some service, induced Mr. Magney often to visit the house in Paradise Row. It was better that she should not be removed to an airier place, for she would be less talked of here in this refuge of the poorest and wretchedest people of the town, and he could not well have found anywhere a nurse so careful and kind as Mrs. Jannings was already becoming. The appearance and address of this good woman had marvellously improved now that she had Polly to love her, and a husband growing kind, and plenty of important occupation from morning to night that left her no time for gossip.

Despite all care, the strange lodger became utterly ill. Her powers, mental and physical,

had evidently been terribly overwrought, and now quite gave way. She lay for weeks very near to the dark death she so earnestly coveted, and then only slowly strengthened out of her fever. She rarely spoke at all, but, when she thought no one could hear, would still utter her piteous groanings for hours together. Her one source of consolation was her child. Even in the extremity of her illness she could never bear it out of her sight for an instant; and now that she was recovering she loved to have it near her on the bed, and would tenderly roll its soft curls round her thin fingers, and fondle it with kisses. "Ah, Noni, darling, you will grow up a good man, and comfort poor, poor mother, won't you, darling? Noni won't be cruel to mother. No. When poor mother has lived for you, and died for you, Noni won't be cruel, and quite break poor mother's heart? And Noni, darling, will never be ashamed of poor mother. No, we will love each other so much—so, so much; for we shall be alone in the world. But Noni will make poor, poor mother happy, won't you, darling?" Noni was simply a pet name chosen for its meaning.

But sometimes the agony of her past shook the poor creature's frame with other emotions than sorrow. "Ah! Noni, Noni, I wish you had not those eyes! Noni, I wish you were all my child, with my eyes, my hair, my look, my voice—or that you *were* not! Ah, I can't bear it! I can't bear it!" And then the wretched woman would hastily remove the child away from her eyes, out of reach of her hands, and grind her teeth, and utter low wild shrieks, and suddenly clench her hands together, and hold them back, as if they would of their own wild will do some desperate deed. Under the violence of these paroxysms she would sometimes swoon away, or else at last fall back wearily, and lie with all the outer—alas! with only the outer—calm of death.

She was a great mystery to simple Mrs. Jennings, and it was another hardship to be added to the list of her life's troubles, already so numerous, that now when she had such an excellent subject for talk with the neighbours, she was rigidly interdicted by Mr. Magney from saying one word; and she felt so much awe of that clergy-

man, and so much gratitude for his kindness, that she dared not be disobedient. Still it seemed a sin against Providence, and a despising of special mercies, to have exclusive possession of an unfailing subject for gossip, and not to make any use of it.

When the warm winds of June blew, Jannings, who now never spent any of his good earnings at the public-house, took a pretty cottage in the new district near the church, and let the two top rooms to a comrade of the mallet, and one of the other rooms to the sorrowful stranger in whom they had taken so much interest. The only drawback to this pleasant arrangement was that Mrs. Jannings found herself in danger of being uplifted with pride at this grand rise in the world, to be mistress of a whole house, when a short time ago the height of her ambition only reached to "living in two rooms."

Here the convalescent regained strength more rapidly, and was soon able to earn enough to support herself and child, and pay rent, by fine needlework for some of the ladies of Hamerton, plenty of which, at good prices, was at once

secured for her by Mrs. Clayton. She did not care, however, for the visits of the Claytons, and would feign some excuse for not seeing them, or any other visitors, whether they came to bring spiritual consolation or work. Kind Mrs. Jannings consented to take up the orders to her room, and Tam most willingly took the work home when finished. As she grew better, Armstrong intermitted his visits to the house, but she did not seem to remark this, though the only emotion she ever expressed was her gratitude to the Janningses and to the good minister. "He saved me from death, but perhaps it was a cruel kindness. Yet I must live for the child's sake, as he says." She never went out of doors—the world of sunshine and flowers was not made for her—except on Sunday evenings, at the urgent entreaty of the big-hearted Tam, who felt that Mr. Magney's sermons must carry balm to her grief, however deep its cause. So she went to please the simple man who had been so kind to her, and to feel herself in the presence of the holy minister who had shown so deep a pity for her. But it is questionable whether she listened

much to what was said. Probably her sorrow, whatever it was, would require something more costly than words for cure. Even in the hottest evenings she always wore a thick veil, and sat in the deep shade under the gallery, and always hastened away immediately the service was over.

There was indeed one other walk which Mrs. Smith took,—so she called herself,—but that was always quite early in the morning, as the lark sang his first song, and no passers-by were about. It was to the graveyard by St. Jude's, to an unnoticeable grass-grown mound on one side where the grass grew rank. She always took little Noni, and laid him on a shawl because of the dew, but so that he could reach his little hands to the nodding buttercups. "Darling Noni will love the pretty flowers, won't you? and kiss them, and stroke them softly, like that. No, Noni, not pulling out the petals, and breaking them. Oh, no, darling, for you can never mend them again. Noni must grow up good."

Then, when the child was happy with the flowers, she would kneel and pray,—if prayer be the urgent cry of the soul to a being beloved, but

unseen; but not to God did she pray; to her mother. "Darling mother, why did not you take me when you died? Did not you love me enough? Oh yes; but you did not know what was coming. God knew, but He did not care. Darling mother, do come to me! Or shall I come to you? Shall I? Do tell me! And shall I bring Noni too? Or will he grow up and be a good man? Darling mother, do come and comfort me. I am so sorrowful, so sorrowful. But perhaps God won't let you. Perhaps He has killed you, and you can't hear me. Then I hope He'll kill me too. Dear darling, you would hear me if you still lived. I think I must come soon, and try to find you."

One morning, on her way to her mother's grave, she found a young creature huddled up in sleep between two graves; her tawdry finery torn and faded, and dank with dew. Her blotched face, almost concealed beneath the broken bonnet drawn over it, was fearfully repulsive, but Mrs. Smith felt that she could not pass the wretched creature by. Here was a sister whose degradation was infinitely worse

than hers, and whom she might possibly help. So she sat by, on one of the graves, and amused her little one by blowing away the feathered seed-balls of the dandelion. "Is it not pretty?" murmured she, in a very low voice, so as not to disturb the sleeper. "Now, Noni, blow! there it goes, for a fairy to ride in. And perhaps it will drop somewhere, and find a little bed in the earth like poor mother's dead mother, and there grow up to be a pretty flower, and Noni blew it! That's better than Noni breaking the poor flowers, isn't it?" At the same time she waved her handkerchief, and kept off the big black flies that liked to crawl over the coarse hands and face of the sleeper.

When the girl first opened her eyes she looked perplexed; then taking in the scene at a glance, she yawned, stretched her arms, sat up on the opposite grave, and began to lace up her broken boots. "I wondered where I was," said she, in a loud thick voice; "at fust I thought I was in Heaven, and you was my mother turned to a angel; but I don't expect no such luck. I'm for the other place."

Poor Mrs. Smith forgot all her own sorrow in anxiety for this young creature, and used all arguments and persuasion she could think of to induce her to abandon her life of shame. Mary Rogers told her something of her history, a very sad one—perhaps she told the truth—and said that she thought her mother and father would forgive her if she went home, and was a good girl; only she had no money for the journey. “But I’m happier livin’ with young Jim Swile, blessed if I ain’t, except when we has rows. I haven’t been near him now for a week, but I think I’ll go to-day and make it up. But I promise you if he ain’t more reasonable, and if he won’t promise never to see somebody again I knows of, I’ll come here to-morrow morning, and see you, as you say, and go home to mother.”

And the next morning she came. Mrs. Smith tried to show her how far happier she might yet be if she were good and steady, and had a husband and home of her own; and then from the small store of her earnings Mrs. Smith gave the girl enough for the rail journey, and to keep her

a day or two if she were not received by her mother. The girl seemed touched, and promised to write to Mrs. Smith, but refused to give her own address. But Mrs. Smith never heard from her, nor received any assurance of the way in which the money was really spent.

As they parted, Mrs. Smith had pressed her lips on the girl's bloated cheek. "It is strange," she thought, "how I feel the oneness between myself and this wretched girl, yet I can scarcely permit myself to touch the hand of these good people, like Mrs. Clayton; as though I did not belong to womanhood. Yet I am pure and innocent as they. Poor little Noni, kiss poor mother, and grow up good, and make poor mother strong in heart again."

CHAPTER VIII.

" Do wolves seduce a wandering fawn in France?
 Do eagles, who have pinched a lamb with claws,
 Seduce it into carrion? So with me.
 I was not ever, as you say, seduced,
 But simply murdered.
 Down came next day's noon and caught me there
 Half gibbering and half raging on the floor,
 And wondering what had happened up in heaven,
 That suns should dare to shine, when God himself
 Was certainly abolished." *Aurora Leigh.*

TOWARDS the end of June, Armstrong paid one of his now infrequent visits to "The Pansies," Jannings's cottage. He was glad that Mrs. Smith had got so much better, and was now apparently doing well. As he could afford her no further help—for he supposed her hidden sorrow was quite beyond his power to alleviate, and all he could say to her she heard in his sermons—all

special remembrance of her was fading fast out of his mind, especially as the prosecution of his critical studies was becoming more intensely anxious and difficult. It seemed to him as if in the proportion in which his church of All Souls advanced towards completion, his hopes of ever preaching in it diminished. However, with resolute grasp he held at a distance the sceptical conclusions that began to seem inevitable, knowing how things held near to our small vision block out the light, and even blot out all the world. He must calmly wait on.

So this hot, weary June evening, as he sat by the open window in Mrs. Smith's room, reading a few verses from his favourite Psalm, the twenty-seventh, she was struck more deeply than she had ever been before with an expression of intense pain in his countenance. So, without purposing it, she said, as he paused at the end of the ninth verse, "Ah, Sir, you, too, suffer; and that is why your words reached to my soul when it was dead to all but the hope of death. Only you are holy and good, and I am not."

Then, fearing her words would be misunder-

stood by the only friend she had in the world, she instantly added, "I mean I am not holy, but I am innocent," and her eyes flashed with light.

"I always knew that," very gently returned Armstrong, but with a tone of pain quite perceptible. He had carefully avoided all expressions that he thought might have led her to tell him her sad story. He did not like having confided to him so many painful histories, unless there was a use in it, and wondered why all sorts of people opened their griefs to him. But, in truth, he was one of the natively-formed great souls, tender, with delicate sympathies, and stern in honour, who are the true priests to whom confessions must be made,—and more, by whom absolution can be given. For when he, so good and holy, held out hope to the erring, and did not disdain them in their vileness, it was a prophecy and pledge that the good God would be merciful too and forgive them, and it gave life to the awful hope that damning sins could be absolved from their souls. Indeed, with the dawn of the hope the cleansing began.

But this woman needed to have kindled in her, not hope of pardon, but a hope which, when once dead, is harder far to restore,—a hope which, she felt, not earth nor heaven, nor the God of both, could call back to life.

“You are too holy to despise me if I tell you, Sir, and I have often wanted to tell one friend here, in case of any accident to my mind.”

She pushed her chair back behind the curtain, and spoke on in a hoarse, low voice out from the dim darkness.

“Father died when I was little. Darling mother died when I was twelve. Then a lady who knew my mother took charge of me, and sent me to a good boarding-school. Then, as they said I made good progress, she sent me to a German school for two years, where I studied German and French and Italian. When I was eighteen she made me governess to her younger daughters. The family removed to Florence. The eldest son came on a visit from college. When none of his sisters were near, he courted me. I was afraid of him; I knew he was wicked; I hated him; I would not speak a word

to him ; I would not stop anywhere near him for an instant unless his sisters were by."

The girl's voice—she was still so young—grew husky with strong passion, but sank lower in tone. Armstrong would have stopped the sad recital, but who was he that he should refuse his ear to the shame that a sister had had to suffer ? If God could allow it, surely he could hear of it. And besides, he might be of some help.

"I hated him, but God did not. He bribed the maid who slept in the room with me, and one night she put some drug into my drink." The voice of the poor creature was altogether choked with mingled emotions of rage, shame, grief. Armstrong covered his face with his hands, murmuring, "Good God, it was too evil to be suffered !—don't speak more."

"In the morning," she gasped convulsively, "the maid laughed at me, said I was a fool to mind being made a fine lady. I could not control my passion. I don't know what I did. I saw *him*. I could have torn his eyes out, but I disdained to touch him, even to murder him. He said he would take care of me ; that if I said

anything I could not hurt him, but only ruin my own character. He had a purse in his hands. I fled. I don't know where I went. I flung myself in a river, but they cruelly dragged me out. I think I was mad then. But I was sent to some big house, where they took care of me. Then I had a fever. I wanted to die, but death was too cruel to pity me. The child was born. I often determined to kill it, but I loved it too much. But even now my hands often want to kill it and myself too. Then I felt I would come to England, where perhaps the spirit of my mother was. So I ran away, and worked and begged till I came here. It was in a town like this that we lived once before mother died. And I wanted to die. You ought to have let me die. But you did not know, else you would not have been cruel too."

Her tone had sunk to a whisper, and there was a dead silence, only broken by a deep groan of Armstrong.

After some minutes, with sudden energy, she began in a tone of bitterest indignation, "And you good people believe in a God and in a

Saviour. So did I once, till God showed that he hated me—if there is a God. You good people think all must be right somehow, because you are not wretched, or if you are injured a little you feel it is fair, because you have harmed others. And so you talk of God's goodness and mercy. Why is He not *just*? Good is He? Why was He not good to me that night? Christ is a Saviour, you people say; why did He not save me that night then? There is no God! no God for me. If there is, I will never pray to Him till He restores me my honour. He should not have made me, if He could not have helped this. Can God undo the past? Can He unmake it so that it shall never have been? Will He insult me with an offer of heaven to atone for the wrong I have suffered, as *he* did with the purse? I am wronged, and there can be no atonement—not even in *his* blood!”

As she spoke she rose in a convulsion of agony from her seat, spread her arms wildly in the air, and staggered backwards. She would have fallen heavily to the floor, but Armstrong caught her, and laid her gently down. The little child, used

to scenes of misery, only set up a small piteous wail. Armstrong could not yet call Mrs. Jannings, he was too agitated. So, tremblingly, he reached water from the small stand, dashed it on the pale face, noticed how lovely the gold hair looked gemmed with the silver drops of water, chafed the small, delicate hands, and mastered all his emotion to a calm appearance as quickly as he could.

When the eyes opened, she said plaintively, "You will not despise me, Sir?"

"No, sister," was all his reply.

Then, after a time, she said, "I am not Mrs. Smith, I am Helen. I have no other name. Mother's is gone from me."

"You will be Mrs. Smith to everybody here, and you will be to me my sister Helen, if you will let me be your brother."

"Yes," said she simply.

Armstrong had no sleep that night. He paced his room with unsteady step. He felt he could love this woman far more easily than any woman he knew. Nay, he felt he did love her in her nobleness and misery, and that he could gladly

sacrifice himself to piece up in part the broken happiness of her ruined life. But at the same time he felt that the sentiment that swayed him so powerfully was a brotherly affection, an enthusiasm of humanity; not that exquisite personal devotion to another being which alone could be *love* to him. He knew that the feeling he had for her was exactly that which made him feel that there could be no heaven to him if any soul of fellow-sinner was lost for ever; that made him feel that he could be accursed and damned for his brethren to save them from hell, or to share it with them if remedy for them were hopeless. So it would not be difficult for him to spend himself to buy this woman hope.

But deeper thoughts agitated him. Was there any divine purpose for the accomplishment of which it could be justifiable to allow the perpetration of such wrongs? He hoped so, and said to himself, how high that purpose must be, seeing that it is not too dearly bought even by such sacrifices! How bright must be the light that casts such deep shadows! He was most anxious still to believe that the purpose over all

the world was good, and not evil or coldly indifferent. But then there were such hideous doubts. He feared he could not much longer hold to his faith against such overwhelming evidence. In bitter unbelief his heart cried, "Let God show what this purpose is for which millions of men are tormented on the earth these thousands of years! Oh let God at least give some sort of assurance that He has such a sufficient reason, if He cannot, or will not, let us see what the purpose is. Let us at least be favoured with some pledge that we are not tantalized in sport, or in spite. If the Gospel history of the incarnation and sacrifice and resurrection of a Saviour-God is intended to afford this hope, why not make its historic proof a little surer? And we want a living Christ, not one who has left the world eighteen hundred years. O Christ, come! or come again! or come! Perhaps Satan hinders. Perhaps the old seers were right who said there was an eternal principle of evil as well as of good. Then let the Good manifest Himself to us, that we may fight with him against evil! Let the Christ come, so that we need not rationally be

compelled to doubt; and, at least, let God be good, if He is not almighty. But if He prefer might to right, then"—Armstrong paused before Harvey's painting—"then let me be tormented with Prometheus, rather than reign with Jove."

All this would have sounded perhaps very wild and impious to the good, respectable people, could they have heard it. But perhaps it was not a mass of incoherent and wicked raving in the ears of the pitiful God. These wild cries were utterances of devotion to Goodness, of passionate loyalty to the Right, and so were pure, unselfish worship of Him who is the Absolute Good, and only omnipotent because supreme in Righteousness and Love.

Perhaps if Strauss had ever felt, or ever witnessed, the anguish of a soul of Armstrong's sensibility, dreading to abandon the old sacred convictions, yet willing to give up all for Truth, he would hardly have said that "the rending of the heart," in the process of "separating the abiding elements of Christianity from the products of transient opinion, might be got over at



the expense of a *slight headache*, and a little application of the reason."

As the stars began to fade into the dawn, Armstrong reached down a book full of strange, deep thoughts, 'Man and his Dwelling-place,' and read and re-read a number of passages he had marked in the chapters on Ethics. "A joy so great springs out of the suffering, in our knowledge of that for which it is, that suffering itself is changed. Knowledge of man's redemption, which shows all suffering to be suffering for the world, makes a new thing of human life; inverts it; more than doubles it; extracts from that part of it (how large a part!) which we have deemed mere loss and evil, a value infinitely exceeding all the rest; makes suffering more to be desired than that to which we have hitherto abused the name of joy. For in suffering we are one with Christ." "We cannot be happy, nor content, while we think that there is truly evil, that the world is going, even in part, to an evil end. And we cannot, without the grossest closing of our eyes to facts, think otherwise, unless we can recognize something more in human life than it

appears to us ; a reference to some other end than those which we naturally suppose. For in respect to those ends it is a failure palpable and manifest. Neither man's enjoyment, nor his virtue, is secured. But to know man's need of redemption from a state of death, and to understand the fact of it, makes all things right ; gives us a source of happiness perfect and unassailable, a spring of energy which nothing can damp. Be the phenomenon what it may, of agonizing misery, or *wrong unspeakable*, our eye is fixed upon the deep underlying fact ; in this, too, man is being delivered from himself, being raised from self-seeking to self-sacrifice. Nothing could be spared, nothing could be otherwise. Man, being as he is, must so be made alive."

"If there be no evil but that which love makes necessary, then there is no evil ; no pain but pain borne for man's life, then is pain utterly transformed. The one love, that is in and through all things, by which all things are, the love that is the only joy, smiles also through the tears of sorrow. Life stands confessed beneath the mask of death."



of the place. When the Mossingfords broke up their establishment some years ago, it was rumoured that it was because the affairs of the estate had been left in an embarrassed condition by Mr. Mossingford, who had just died; a condition not likely to be improved by the recklessness of the eldest son, who was understood to be very wild. So, it was said, the family went abroad to save the expense of their large household, and were now coming back to the old place, because, doubtless, their affairs were quite prosperous again. Two or three of the eldest daughters had married well, and one of the sons had married into an aristocratic family, and had had preferment in the army. The eldest son, Ronald, having now sown his wild oats, would, doubtless, according to the beneficent arrangement which appeared to be made in the express advantage of good, well-connected families, reap an easy harvest of the finest wheat in the mature part of his life, and, in abundant ease and leisure and esteem, represent with dignity the old family name. Things generally turning out so well for the rich and the strong, seem to make up

for the unpleasant losses of those who are not so well able to take care of themselves. If, in this rather confused mess of human affairs, some apparently get more misery than they deserve, it seems to be quite made up by others getting more success than *they* deserve. To him that hath is given, even if from him that hath not is taken away the poor little he had. These were the sort of reflections that would perversely recur to Armstrong's mind, and that prevented his making an early call at the Hall. But most of the gentry-folk had a far wiser view of the intentions of Providence, and were very gratified at the opportunity of resuming their connection with the pleasant Hall, and the good, highly-respectable family whose name it bore.

The Claytons were amongst the earliest visitors. The good rector had always been greatly esteemed by the Mossingfords, and was warmly welcomed as an old friend. The fine elderly lady and he had a very long chat over various matters of interest that had happened since they last met, and over the present affairs of Hamerton. And the two girls and Arthur were de-

lighted to see again the pleasant kindly minister of whom they had retained only happy recollections from the time of their childhood. Mrs. Mossingford was gratified that the rector noticed the fine appearance of her children, in whom he felt a sort of personal interest, as though by growing up tall and fair they did credit to his baptizing, and further remarked to him, "You will be charmed with Ronald, too; he will be here in a few days, as soon as he can leave some affairs of importance in which he has been engaged in connection with the Danish Conference which has just terminated so unsatisfactorily."

Mr. Clayton made some successful attempts to interest Mrs. Mossingford in the various new agencies by which he and the curates were endeavouring to overtake the wants of the rapidly increasing population of the town. And especially he wished to predispose the family favourably towards his much-loved assistant minister, Mr. Magney, whose church was built on ground bought of the Mossingford estate, and in whose proposed new district the hall was situated. But no efforts were necessary.

"We are glad that you, too, have so high an opinion of Mr. Magney," said Mrs. Mossingford. "Really he seems to be the most popular person in the place. Every one speaks of him, and every one likes him."

"They do not over-value him," said Mr. Clayton.

"I assure you," remarked Miss Flora, with an arch smile, "we are all quite impatient to see him, at least sister and I are. Every visitor who calls tells us something about him more wonderful than the last. If it was the Arabian Nights instead of the English days, he would be some wonderful genius or good sorcerer-prince in disguise. We have had three accounts to-day, each excelling the last, of his grand exploits with the demons, when, alone, and armed only with speech, he made conquest of a vast mob of wild drunken ruffians. I am dying to see the hero."

"Nonsense! don't talk such stuff," said Madeleine, who was seventeen, a year older than her sister, and who generally showed a very lively sense of Flora's want of proper gravity. "Mr. Clayton will think we are so rude."

"No, Mr. Clayton will never think you are a mad maid, Madeleine; and as for me, Mr. Clayton always loved me, and can't help it, whatever I say, and he knows that in every Flora there's sure to be a lot of wild-flowers."

"And really the wild-flowers are sometimes very pretty," said the rector, much amused, and kissing the hand that was suddenly placed very affectionately in his. Whereupon the warm-hearted child threw her arms round the good rector's neck, and kissed his smooth lips and soft white hair.

"Pray excuse my little daughter," cried mamma; "she is so very demonstrative. But really, child, you must learn to command yourself."

"Yes, mamma, and other people too," said the girl roguishly.

When Armstrong made his call a day or two later, he was welcomed with an unusual friendliness, and made to feel that Mrs. Mossingford and her daughters entertained for him a high regard. He had to promise to give Arthur some lessons in feathering the oar—a bend of the river Hamer clasped the Hall grounds like a silver arm—and

to come next Saturday morning to a croquet party. Though he said he hardly knew the game, Miss Flora was positive he would beat everybody but her. Flora struck a very sudden and strong friendship for the wonderful young clergyman, and told him, as a secret, that when she heard of him, she thought he was a fairy prince in disguise, and that now she was quite sure of it. Armstrong had been introduced also to a niece of Mrs. Mossingford, who had accompanied the family from the Continent, and Miss Flora told him in her ready communicativeness, while showing him some of her water-colour sketches, that cousin Lorissee was engaged to her brother Ronald, and that they would be married very soon. "You should see her paintings," went on the pretty prattler; "that's one, a Sunset on the Adriatic, you see it? through the folding doors; everybody says it is quite like Turner's sunset in the towing of the Temeraire, but she won't listen an instant to the comparison of any painting with Turner, and says it is like comparing a bit of red glass with ruby; both have colour it is true, but one is a poor manu-

facture, and the other a gem of nature splendid with living light. Lorissee is a fairy princess, too; I am so glad she is going to be my sister, and live always here. Oh, she talks so wonderfully, and is full of enthusiasms, not like other people, and never tells me that my tongue is wild, and ought to be clipped."

No other visitors happening to call at this hour, Armstrong found that he could not make a speedy departure; Mrs. Mossingford and the girls were evidently so pleased to keep him talking on all sorts of subjects. Miss Lorissee Cellini looked up very brightly now and then from a group of purple azaleas which she was painting with delicate carefulness, and made very charming remarks. Doubtless it was her occupation that suggested a turn in the conversation to painting. They had spent the season in town before coming down to Hamerton, and had been charmed with many of the paintings of the year. They had noticed Alfred Harvey's strange group of Paracelsus and Festus, with the lines from Browning—

"I am for noble Aureole, God!
I am upon his side, come weal or woe!
His portion shall be mine! He has done well!"

and were now interested with Armstrong's account of his friend's letter, and criticism on his possible critics, and of the sending to him of the rejected picture, which doubtless, said Armstrong, would have been censured unsparingly by the critics, judging from their treatment of the picture admitted, for the rejected one in conception and treatment was wilder far. Armstrong had to make a further promise of sending the painting he praised so highly for a week's stay at the Hall.

"Did you visit the Exhibition of water-colours at the Old Gallery, Mr. Magney?" asked Mrs. Mossingford.

"Yes, and I have pleasant remembrance of some of the paintings. How pretty was Walker's piece of a girl gathering cowslips with her dress caught in a hazel thicket! and Smallfield's 'Julia' I thought excellently done. And there was a meeting of a fair creature and her knight on the turret stairs of an old castle tower, very tenderly conceived and powerfully painted—you remember it—by Burton?"

"Oh yes," said Lorissee, looking up; "Hillelil

and Hildebrandt it was called ;” then, as she cast her deep dreamy eyes down again, she recited the lines in a voice full of mystic music—

“ My father gave me a peerless guard,

—*My sorrow none knows but God.*

Twelve noble knights for my watch and ward.

—*And there liveth none shall hear my sorrow.*

“ Eleven daily served me true—

—*My sorrow none knows but God.*

The twelfth loved me—I loved him too,

—*And there liveth none shall hear my sorrow.”*

“ How very sentimental !” broke in the wild Flora ; “ I suppose she ate up the twelfth ! I have often heard of lovers being devoured with kisses. That is why I don’t intend to have a lover who has big teeth.”

“ Absurd child !” said mamma ; “ I shall have to banish you to the nursery.”

Madeleine looked with some anxiety towards the clergyman, and was relieved to find that there was no appearance of his being very greatly shocked.

“ Do you think, Sir,” she began at once, to divert attention from her sister’s wild speech, “ that Burne Jones’s paintings there were good ?

His style seems so very grotesque. We had some very pleasant controversy with cousin over his 'Cinderella,' and especially about his knight before the figure of a Christ that bowed to him."

"I am afraid, Miss Mossingford, I had the odd taste to admire his paintings very much. But the wild and grotesque runs everywhere through some people, like flaws in marble, and I think I am one of these."

"I thought at first that cousin Lorissee expressed her great admiration only to show a pretty perversity, judging her by myself," said Flora; "and really it is strange that in a highly civilized Christian country, in the nineteenth century, there should be found people of wonderful sense, who can admire such pieces of antiquated barbarism. But it is because they are fairies in disguise, and think such hideous things are like the fantastic world they really belong to."

"Yes," said Lorissee, without looking up, "their sense of beauty being like what papa used to tell me was Plato's explanation of our perception of truth, and goodness, and music,

and form;—the broken recollection, suggested by a world of appearances, of the actual world of the gods in which they formerly lived.”

“What, indeed ! but you do not really believe that we have been alive before ! Oh, how heathenish it sounds ! Does it not, Mr. Magney ?” asked Miss Flora.

“But if so,” he replied, “surely it does not necessarily follow that it must be wrong ?”

“And you believe it too ? Oh no ! it’s impossible.”

“Indeed I do not say I believe it, but it would be hard to disprove it. Are you quite certain, Miss Flora, that you were never the fairy of the flowers, and that you, too, are not a princess in disguise ?”

“Oh, you are very artful, but I won’t be won over. And, Mr. Magney,”—here Flora’s tone became more sober,—“the Bible does not say we have lived before ?”

“Most people think not, Miss Flora ; but you remember when the Jews asked the Saviour concerning the man born blind, whether he had sinned or his parents, to deserve this infliction,

the Lord did not negative the implied suggestion that he might have sinned before this life, and therefore have had a prior existence, but He said that the man's blindness had happened to show the glory of God, in His pitying of the misery, and removal of it."

"That is very wonderful. But do you really think—" Flora was puzzled.

"There are so many wonders to be found everywhere," Mr. Magney replied, "about which our words are only ignorance. It must be enough for us to do our duty nobly here, since at least we can hardly doubt that we are here, though some very wise people are not certain even of that." Armstrong smiled as he said this. "But where have we left Burne Jones and the strange pictures? I should like to hear Miss Cellini's thoughts about them?"

"They please me," said Lorissee, "because Nature is other and larger than the ordinary smooth pieces of conventional painting would give you to think. There is such a wonderful mystery in nature and in life; a wildness of power—an awful shadow—a passion of tender-

ness—and a wonderful hope, all so great and so near to us; and he is the true poet and the true painter who can flash this into our souls. And if he does this, it does not matter how, whether with sunlight or with lightning. And all awkwardnesses are more than forgiven the man who can do this, just as we will excuse the roughness of the axe that cleaves a way for us, or, at least, for our eyes, out of our dungeon into God's heaven."

The light growing large in her deep eyes, and the rich tint of her cheek glowing deeper, her hair drawn from the white temples, and hanging back in heavy dark braids, a suitable background to her finely-expressive features,—the fair Italian might have been one of the Greek goddesses of old. Meeting Armstrong's look full of sympathy and apprehension, she dropped her gaze again, and resumed her brush.

"But," persisted Flora, "what the painting was teaching, seemed to me to be a piece of foolish superstition. I wish I could remember the quotation. Can you, Madeleine? You said it over a great many times."

“Yes, I think so :—‘Of a knight who was merciful to his enemy when he might have destroyed him ; and how the image of Christ kissed him, in token that his acts had pleased God.’ Now, that could not have been true ; it must be all Popish legend.”

“Indeed, Miss Mossingford, I venture to think it is all true. Not in the mere outward action, but doubtless to some knight’s inner apprehension, and always true everywhere, according to the unseen actual of things. He who denies the baseness of his nature and is merciful, is at one with the Spirit of God, and with the Spirit of the crucified Christ, and so to him the all-present Spirit of God causes images, or trees, or stones, to impress him with divine messages, and to his spirit come kisses from the unseen Christ, for all things are one in the one living God.”

Lorisse had never heard talk at all like this, except from her father, an Italian noble, who, for his fair country’s sake, had languished long in prison, and lost half his wealth. And Cellini, perhaps, had not put such spiritual fervour into his talk, for he was one of the modern hea-

then, as some people call them, who can believe in no dogmas, but who can live and die for a noble cause. After what she could not but esteem the silly conventionalism of most of the religious people, Catholic or Protestant, whom she had ever known, the wide liberality and pure hope which characterized Armstrong's talk, came to her like the change from a narrow room to a wide landscape full of sunlight and cool breezes.

After they had talked about the small volume of poems by Miss Ingelow which had pleased them, and about Newman's 'Apologia,' and the papers of the 'Competition Wallah,' and had devoted a longer time to the volume of Browning's just published, 'Dramatis Personæ,' and after Armstrong had given some various parish information to Mrs. Mossingford, the visit came to an end.

As Armstrong walked hastily home, he reminded himself of Miss Flora's information, that the fair Italian was engaged to be married to Ronald Mossingford.

CHAPTER X.

"But there are others, the chief poignancy of whose sufferings comes from an irrepressible doubt of right, a burning passion to penetrate the impenetrable meaning of their anguish. They might gird themselves up to endure, but they cannot tolerate the unreason, the waste, the seeming wrong. . . . There is one condition under which all know that pain is not truly an evil, but a good. This is when pain is willingly borne for another's sake. Its entire character is altered then."—*The Mystery of Pain*.

ARMSTRONG did not fail of his appointment for croquet on the Saturday morning. It is questionable whether six months ago he would have cared to find time from his duties for such an engagement; but now he felt that he needed, even for health's sake, some distractions from the severe anxieties of his critical studies, and from the constant thought of the darkness that was slowly setting in over his soul, and over his life. And there could be no harm in this simple relax-

ation with these delightful children ; and if it was pleasant to him to catch again the full gaze of Lorisse's deep eyes, it was strange indeed if he might not permit himself so simple a gratification. Only Alfred Boutell would be there, with one or two of his sisters. When they had a large croquet party he should not come. But this time—he went.

There was one addition to the small party in the person of gallant Captain Jermyn, who had for several seasons devoted himself to croquet as a change from billiards, and who was reckoned one of the best players at both games in all the society of Hamerton. Miss Flora was in high glee, expecting some good play. They agreed that it would be a pity to break up into two sets, though the party was rather large for one. Flora, with her extreme vivacity, easily made herself mistress of the ceremonies. As soon as there were enough hearers on the lawn, she delivered herself very prettily of what seemed like a set speech ; but really, words were so ready to the girl, that possibly it was all said straight out as she thought it.

“I think I ought to be esteemed a public benefactor by all generations of croquet players, as long as the world shall be croquet round and round the sun. I have devised such an improvement! You know, Captain Jermyn, in croquet, as in the game of life, there are two great requisites,—first, to know thyself—that is, your own ball; and secondly, to know who are friends and who enemies. So I have had four balls gilt and four silvered, and so you always know at a glance the position of friends and enemies,—and the gold and silver look pretty on the grass. And round each ball runs the band of colour; so you never forget yourself!”

Sufficiently gratified with the light laughter raised by her speech, Flora proceeded, “As I have won golden opinions, I shall generously give up the gold balls. You must plan for your own side, Captain Jermyn, and prepare yourself for defeat with all a soldier’s fortitude. Lorissee says that Ruskin insists that a soldier’s duty is to be killed and not to kill, so I hope you will put yourself in the way of our balls.”

“You will play, my side, Mr. Magney,” said

the little witch coaxingly, "and we must help cousin and Arthur, because they don't play well. Blue leads!" and the first silver ball, skilfully tapped once, twice, thrice, passed through the first two hoops, and rolled over the long space into an excellent position for roquing the balls that should lie for the third hoop. Unfortunately at her turn Miss Cellini missed the second hoop, and then got croqueted across the lawn by Captain Jermyn.

"Oh, let your ball stay and help brown, while I push the game on to the post and wait for you," said Flora to Mr. Magney, to whom she had given the black-striped ball in playful compliment to his "cloth." Then a clever roque and strong croquet of the black, by Boutell, still further hindered progress; and Flora, in dismay, beheld from the turning-peg which she had reached and passed again, that black and brown were behind, and that the golden side were winning fast on with all their balls.

"Oh, Mr. Magney, this is dreadful!" said she, taking her stand near, to watch his next stroke.

"My hand is not in yet," he replied, "but I

shall try my best not to cause you defeat." He was amused at her great earnestness, and put his mind really to the task. Then he croqueted brown obliquely through the second hoop almost to the third, made a hazardous stroke for the third hoop himself, and wiring it, went through; returned to brown, roquing and croquing it through the remaining right-side hoops; and then with help of two gold balls which he "dismissed" east and west over the lawn, the black brought the brown up to the turning-peg; there black croqueted the silver-green, Arthur's, straight through the two return hoops, and then the brown after it; "dismissed" another of the gold balls, came on through the hoops, and finished by leaving the four silver balls in position before the return side-hoops.

Flora was in ecstasies. "What a splendid break! It has changed the dark aspect of the field to one of silver brightness. You are my knight Saladin, and under your valiant blows the silver moon rises in the ascendant. In your ball—black and silver-white—extremes meet, for it was last just now, and now it is first;" and she

went prattling on, pleased that she could raise a smile on the face of such a wonderful clergyman, and such a brilliant croquet-player.

It was the Captain's turn next ; and as he carefully balanced his mallet, he thought, with a very mild indignation that it was not in his nature to overpass, "Why the dickens must this fellow succeed so well in everything ! It is rather provoking." However he made a good stroke, and felt consoled when he had croqueted the four moons to the ends of the lawn.

During the progress of the game there occurred many opportunities for short pieces of conversation between Armstrong and Lorissee.

"Yes, I like England for some things very much. I like many of the people,—so full of earnest life, and calm strong feeling. And I like to feel myself in the grand country which my mother, and my father too, taught me to love. My mother was English ; I saw many English friends and read English books. My dear mother pined away when my father was in prison. My father had a pure, grand soul. He was a noble patriot. I could not make out well the intricacies

of politics ; I was too young, but I fear my father was too sanguine and thought the nation was ripe for greater liberty than it deserved. So he and my dear mother were sacrificed for their country, for they died early through the sickness and grief. And I too have lost in their loss unutterably."

"But you could not wish them to have been less noble, however great the suffering," replied Armstrong; "and is it not even a great joy to you to give up what is so precious to you for God and the world?"

"But often it seems to me that these losses, and all losses, are in vain?"

"Not if there is a good God over the world. Every pang and bitterness must have its appropriate place in some great giving-up of Man, for a time, for the lasting good of the universe. I am sure your nature feels how that word strikes deep to the heart of truth, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive;' hence the power of the Cross in the world's history. To give up is divine. Must it not be that in God's self-abnegation creation rolls forth! You remember the lines in *Aben-ben-Ezra*:—

‘Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake,—effect, and not receive !
A spark disturbs our clod ;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must believe.’”

“It is grand,” replied Lorissee ; “when such thoughts lift the soul, one longs to consecrate life to some good for the world. Oh, how dear should be any agony that could burst our bonds, and leave the soul free to leap to this ideal ! Yet there are already many sacrifices that others have to make in life that seem to reach to the utmost extreme of giving,—and that seem so utterly in vain.”

Lorissee did not know how fearfully true her words were. They struck a dread chill into Armstrong as he recalled the agony and shame of gold-haired Helen.

“Yet,” he replied, “at least we feel that it is better to suffer the direst losses, than be the inflictor of any.”

“But,” Lorissee returned, “that only suggests the chiefest difficulty. The worst sacrifices are those of our righteousness and goodness. And

what fearful examples this dark world presents of the utter loss of these !”

Armstrong replied slowly, and as if speaking with his own heart, “You mean, that though a noble spirit might consent to any anguish of pain for the world’s sake, yet that to become base and commit wrong appears too terrible a sacrifice to be extorted from us for any conceivable good ; and besides, the end does not seem good, but only evil, of such sacrifices.”

“Yes, your words express the great question of my heart,” said Lorissee.

“You feel that it cannot be more right for God to do or suffer evil, that good may come, than for us.”

“Is there any hope in this darkness ?”

“Yes, we may boldly assert that all the evil is only apparent ; that, in a higher sense than Pope meant, whatever *is*, is right ; and that all that seems wrong has no actual existence at all, but only a phenomenal one.

“‘The foulest act with which man’s hands are soiled,
That telleth, loud, humanity’s disgrace,
Leaves on the earth its evil ; undefiled
The Fact uplifts to heaven its holy face.’

So our terrible difficulty would be gone. We should have to ask, not why is there evil in the world of omnipotent goodness, but, for what purpose are we for a time permitted to feel as evil the ineffable good? And if we can know that our great question is to be thus re-read, we shall not be so wildly impatient."

"What a very fair scene this is!" said Lorissee, when an opportunity occurred for her to take her croquet-seat under the shade of a softly-rustling silver-birch. "Nature here so lovely, and life so pleasurable in this elegant ease."

Just then Flora broke into her witching laugh as she dismissed Captain Jermyn's ball, and prepared to croquet one of the silver balls to the winning-post.

Armstrong felt quite as sensitively the fairness of the scene, though, as he stood by the side of Lorissee's chair, in the shadow, and his eyes happened to be fixed on her, the scene to him was necessarily different. He rarely noticed a woman's dress, but Lorissee's happened to please his taste; a simple white muslin, with a ruching of black round the neck and wrists; the skirt, for conve-

nience in croquing, looped up in front, also with black ruching, over the folds of a French-worked underskirt. It is very odd how the eyes unconsciously notice trifles while the mind is occupied, perhaps, with the weightiest thoughts.

"But I cannot enjoy such a life, I can scarcely bear it, when I think of the poverty I have witnessed in Florence, and in Paris, and in London; and when I think of the many miseries of the world. I feel I ought to alleviate the wretchedness, or at least share it. Why should my life be a piece of the gold fringe, that, to my eyes, so unsuitably disfigures, and not adorns, the foul, ragged robes in which humanity works and begs?"

"Working in vain, and begging of the rich heaven in vain!" said the devil of unbelief in Armstrong's heart. But his lips said, "We must all do our various duties. Only our own spirit can judge what work we were born for, or what our circumstances permit. But surely God will take care that no fair life shall be lived in vain."

As Armstrong was a minister, it could not be wrong for him to talk to this beautiful woman

like this, he thought. His vocation gave him the right, nay, demanded, that he should try to influence others for good. And really there was no possibility of harm to him, or to this great-souled Italian; she was to be married to Mossingford,—he never forgot that.

After lunch at the hall Armstrong paid a number of visits to the sick of the district, called in at the School to say a few words to the master; finished with Mr. Onslow the arrangements for opening the ragged-school in Paradise Row; walked over to "The Pansies;" took a cup of tea with the Jannings', to the immense gratification of the little mistress of the house, who had grown years younger since their removal here; and walked back with Tam to the meeting of the Benefit Club.

He found time, of course, to see poor Helen upstairs. He was greatly pleased to find that the knowledge of his respect and sympathy for her was alleviating, to some extent, the blank despair in which she formerly lived her weary life. No allusions were ever made to her painful past; but every word he said, or Scripture he repeated,

seemed to have new power now that she knew that he knew all.

That night, when all the small excitements of the day's work were past, and Armstrong flung himself on a couch by his open study windows, quietly to think, while the cool night breezes might soothe his frame for rest, he had a very distinct image of the sort of woman he could love with all the devotion of his nature, and a very distinct remembrance that he had heard that Ronald Mossingford would arrive next week.

CHAPTER XI.

"It is success that colours all in life :
Success makes fools admired, makes villains honest :
All the proud virtue of this vaunting world
Fawns on success and power, howe'er acquired."

Thomson.

IN the next week, Ronald Mossingford arrived at the hall. He had come away from town as soon as the affairs of his assistant-secretaryship in Downing Street permitted. It was his intention to spare as much time as he could in Hamerton, and cultivate carefully the goodwill of the influential people of the place, in order to put up at the general election in a year's time,—if, indeed, the election did not take place earlier,—as a Conservative-Liberal, or, as he called it, an Intellectual-Liberal candidate. And he calculated somewhat confidently on his return. The name was so well known,—and had always been held in

honour,—and the people would be so pleased that an establishment was again set up at the Hall, and would be willing to prevent a disappointment to the young squire which might drive him away in disgust,—and the present Liberal member had really had an innings in Parliament quite long enough for anything he had ever done there, or was likely to do. And then, most of all, young Mossingford was very pleasantly conscious of considerable ability and address, which would enable him to win over the electors, and he pledge to them that he would make an excellent member to represent their interests. All things appeared auspicious. This was natural, for Ronald had always been successful in everything he undertook. His marriage with the lovely Italian would aid his plans, for he would take care that rumour should inform every one that she was of a distinguished family, and a rich heiress. This was one of the reasons why he had wished that the marriage should take place at Hamerton; it would interest every one, and make them popular. Then Lorissee would charm the people so, and with her strong liberal sentiments, and beautiful address

of expression, would help to win over a number of the indifferent, and even, possibly, of the old-fashioned Conservatives. With a handsome rich squire and his lady leading the way, it might become the fashion to be "intellectual-liberal." He devoutly hoped that Lord Palmerston would last on, so that there would be no necessity for much expression on the ultra-liberal or radical notions ; and this was very probable, as the noble lord was happily still facetious and well. Yes, all things took a pleasure in serving the designs of Ronald. Perhaps, like Austria, he had a Providence all to himself ; or, what was more likely, (there's no undue egotism in this, thought he,) things turned out so advantageously, because he deserved it by his excellent ability, and by his natural facility of moving, in convictions and in affairs, in the direction in which the stream set strongest. There are many men of this sort, always sincere, though constantly modifying their views, and always on the winning side.

He had a splendid constitution, which, in college and since, he had taxed severely in various ways, but, apparently, without detriment. He had

taken a creditable place in the first list at Oxford ; but, what was of more consequence, he had proved himself a crack oarsman, won a lot of cups, and made a number of acquaintanceships which were proving very useful. Indeed, his prospects in the political world were remarkably brilliant, and a career of honour and fortune opened straight before him. Then he had wooed and won the loveliest woman in the world, as he thought, and one who could help admirably all his projects, and whom he really loved. Surely it would have been unnatural if he had suffered his mind to rest at all on any dark spots anywhere, when all the world was so bright to him, and he in the full flush of early manhood,—only six or seven and twenty,—with so much life within him and before him.

He was very affectionately welcomed on his arrival at the Hall, though only a few days had passed since he had seen them all in town. Mrs. Mossingford was very proud of her son, but understood his character well enough never to make any display of affection ; that was a comfort to him, for, except from Lorissee, he disliked these

demonstrations; they seemed childish, and simply bored him. However, he often wished that Lorissee was more demonstrative in her affection; she would be, though, when they were married; too much so then, possibly, to suit him; he would not care for it then so much. Ronald was always deferential to his mother, and almost thoughtful of her convenience and wishes, for she had been very helpful to him, both before his father's death in reference to his extravagances, and since then in various matters, and was still likely to be very serviceable to him in the accomplishment of his plans.

His sisters all liked their eldest brother, especially when they were away from him, and could remember his brilliant good qualities without being annoyed at the small instances of his habitual unconcern of them. Not that this was intentional on his part; his intendings were always kind, for then he would be wishing to win some one over to him for some purpose; unless, indeed, which rarely happened, any one stood opposed to him, and then he could be severe enough. But these sisters of his, and other people too, he often simply

forgot, as he had no special need to remember them.

So this afternoon, when Flora and Madeleine sprang forward to kiss their brother, he did not speak one word to them, and only a sentence to his mother, asking if Lorissee was well; and then at once went through several rooms in search of her.

"There's a model brother!" burst out Flora, who had an especial objection to being treated in this cool way; "he did not even look at us, and his kiss was so tender that my lips feel as if they had been rubbed against by a bit of dry clay. I must wipe the dust off," and she took her kerchief, and began rubbing her cherry lips very vigorously.

"Do not be so wild, child!" said Mrs. Mos-singford. "You know he is always so anxious to see Lorissee at once."

Ronald found Lorissee in one of the rooms fronting the lawn. He was a little vexed at first that she was not in the drawing-room with the others, waiting for him; but the vexation all passed as he pressed her close to his bosom, and

kissed her forehead and cheek and hands. Really he looked very handsome, his tall form bending over the girl, his large eyes full of tenderness, and his countenance lit up with happy smiles. His features were very regular, and of a noble type, only his lips were too full, but this defect was hidden by a well-trained black moustache.

"Darling Loe," said the lover, "it has seemed so long since we parted. Only memory could feed on you these last days, and now my eyes can satisfy themselves. You have been quite well? I hastened the business of my affairs as much as possible, and for your sake wished I had nothing to do with them; and yet for your sake I wish I had more. I hope you are charmed with the old place; you'll find it all that I described it, and with rare beauties that only your poet-eyes can see. Let us take a stroll, dear, over the place, and into the grounds, if you are not too fatigued this hot day. You know I have not seen the place for years, except for one day in the spring, when I came down to plan the alterations."

So they walked together. Lorissee was never demonstrative of her affection for her future

husband, and to-day quite as little as ever. But Ronald had no fine discrimination of other people's manner. He was pleased when Lorissee suggested the planting of three or four oval beds of rhododendron on the side-slopes of the lawn. "They should, I think," said she, "be various in colour,—purple, white, pink, scarlet, interspersed, and here and there a yellow azalea." Ronald at once ordered the gardener to see this arrangement made. He was not so pleased to find that several of his own orders had been neglected or modified, and did not, because of Lorissee's excuses for the workmen, forego his determination to express his displeasure, and perhaps make them feel some unpleasant effect of his annoyance.

After Ronald's arrival, the days at Mossingford Hall became even more full of various and variously-pleasant occupation. Invitations were sent out immediately for a grand dinner-party, and an early date fixed for a ball. Numerous invitations were also accepted, and the project forthwith commenced of regaining for the name of Mossingford all its old popularity.

In the midst of all this outward activity, one mind at least found time for much inward examination. Lorissee did not find this life of perpetual excitement in fashionable frivolities at all to her taste. It seemed insignificant even, when compared with her old life of devotion to painting and music and literature; and became even additionally mean in the light of the nobler purposes to which, as she had been feeling these last days more than ever, life should be consecrated. And now and then she had to go over the long course of the old scenes at Florence to enable her to understand how ever she could have come to love Ronald Mossingford. And after all, was her love more than the pale reflex of his passionate devotion? More painfully than ever she felt that he fell immeasurably short of her ideal. And much less certain was she now that that ideal was beyond the attainment of any one. And so all sorts of perplexing thoughts thronged her mind. Why was it that Mrs. Mossingford had schemed so cleverly, though almost unnoticeably, in the affair? It could not have been because Lorissee had so rich a fortune :

no, it must have been simply, as Mrs. Mossingford had said, because she felt that only Loris's influence could save her son from unworthily ruining his life. And in all Loris's perplexity there was at least this source of comfort, that her influence these two years had elevated Ronald, and had proved a magic attraction which kept his aims pointing to honour, with perhaps no deflections. Only even this source of gratification was not unmixed, for it made some of her anticipations of a different future appear hopelessly futile.

It is wonderful to watch the moving light and shade in the ever-changing sky, or to study the liquid play of melting form and colour on the restless ocean; but how much more wonderful the delicate movements in the human heart, where sunshine and calm can give place by such imperceptible degrees to darkening shades of the wildest storms!

CHAPTER XII.

"I confess the awful mystery of life, and the perplexity which hangs around the question—what it is, and what it all means. Nevertheless I am persuaded—as persuaded as I can be of anything in this world—that the meaning is good, and not evil,—good, I trust, to the individual as well as to the whole. . . . Do not tremble at difficulties and shoreless expanses of truth, if you feel drifting into them. God's truth must be boundless."—*The Rev. F. W. Robertson : Life.*

ONE new fashion had set in since the Mossingfords had left Hamerton—a fashion that doubtless was quite local—of attending Divine service on Sunday evening. Magney had persistently declined preaching in the morning, though the rector often desired him, except, indeed, when Mr. Clayton was away or unwell from weakness. So those who wished to hear him were compelled to attend in the evening. On no account would

Armstrong take any course that might give the least pain to the rector.

It would be a not uninteresting study could we discover the various motives that attract people to a "popular preacher." Perhaps very many who went to hear Magney went simply because he was popular. They could have given no other account of their being there. But the having even such a small motive as this was doubtless a not inconsiderable addition to the meagre stock of what they charitably called "their reasons" for things. For those who would tumble off the world into fathomless blank, if it were not for the protection of the ruts in which they always move, are often happily preserved to the world by the formation of these customs, which enable them to know what to do with themselves on the empty Sundays of their existence, in which, but for the rut, they might be compelled to think for themselves, and meet with the sad catastrophe mentioned.

Then some attended to see the best, and the best-looking, people in the place; others, to see their clothes, and studied the congregation as

they would a book of the fashions of the seasons. Some, like Captain Jermyn, went because it was really an agreeable excitement to listen to Armstrong's fine oratory. Others, like old Boutell, for the pleasure of the bold original thinking, which was, in his experience, quite a novelty in pulpit ministrations. Others, like young Boutell, very much from a personal regard for Armstrong, and a hope of catching more of his enthusiasm; or, again, like Tam Jannings, to enjoy the week's chiefest delight, who felt his whole spiritual nature flooded with power and light. Then there were people, like Mrs. Jannings, who received strong religious influences without understanding much of the drift of the discourses, or their allusions to all sorts of subjects, theological and other, but who nevertheless always went home with quickened resolves to try to live a Christian life.

It was the second Sunday after his arrival that Ronald consented to accompany the family to their old pew in the evening. It was the fashion that had influenced him also in this decision, for Lorissee had not expressed any wish in the

matter, and, indeed, had abstained from all but the most commonplace allusions to the young clergyman. The girls always went, and Mrs. Mossingford and Arthur generally. Flora was not quite so devout in manner as her sister, but understood a good deal of what Mr. Magney intended, and often felt an elevation of spirit under the sway of his great thoughts and rich utterance. "Not a fairy prince, but an angel in disguise," said she once to her cousin Lorissey; "a strong angel, like the one he read of in the lesson last Sunday, who stood by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite; not one of the poor namby-pamby drawing-room angels, such as they put in the paintings."

This Sunday evening, as Ronald slowly walked down the sloping lane from the Hall, the fair Italian leaning on his arm, his attention was arrested at the sight of a woman clad in black, who appeared to be making her way on to church from the street in which "The Pansies" stood, and the end of which they passed going from the Hall. She carried a child in her arms, and was accompanied, apparently, by a tall, broad-

shouldered, decently-dressed man, whose bent arm was reached with difficulty by a very little woman, and whose right hand held that of a little toddling girl. Ronald noticed the exquisitely-moulded form of the woman, but could not see her face; presently, however, when she turned in the sunlight to say a word to the little woman, he could distinguish partly the outline of the features under a thick veil, and observed the gleam of gold under the black fall of the bonnet that hid nearly all her hair. Involuntarily Ronald gave a sudden start. Lorisette looked up, and saw that his face was of a deathly paleness. "It's nothing," said he, with very little change from his ordinary tone, and placing his hand across his brow and eyes; "only a sudden shooting pain,—headache, I suppose."

"We had better not go on, perhaps," said Lorisette, a little alarmed.

"Oh yes! the pain goes as suddenly as it comes, and comes but seldom." He had now quite recovered himself. "Lend me your scents, darling; I'll pour a little of your exquisite Ihlange-Ihlange on my handkerchief, and cool my forehead."

They continued the walk just as usual, only as he observed that the woman entered the church-doors at the front, he led the way to the side entrance, from which they could reach their pew just as well. He murmured the responses in low tones, just as usual, with the proper mild attention; but how remote were his thoughts!—thronging back into the past, then hastening on into the future, and planning all sorts of possible contingencies. It was not likely that he took much heed of the Lesson, though it was read with much feeling by Armstrong,—at least others thought so, and felt that his varying tones aptly expressed their own emotions. “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life!” as Armstrong read this, the gold-haired Helen bowed her head, and, almost audibly, said Amen! Then, lower down, he came to the account of the wind and earthquake and fire, by which the Lord tested Elijah, and then of the still small voice in which the message of the living Lord always comes to the souls of men. “What doest thou here, Elijah?” The preacher’s voice seemed to mingle with the tones of the fair Italian’s conscience,

and demand why she was shrinking from the consecration of her life to some great end.

The text was from John's First Epistle, and the sermon ran somewhat thus :—God is one, and Nature is one accordant whole in Him. We cannot rightly say there are two religions, one natural, one revealed. There is one living all-good actuality of things, at present, however, very variously and partially apprehended by man. Our best mode, perhaps, of realizing the one fundamental principle of a universe utterly good, but felt as evil by us because of our imperfect state, is to call it thus : negatively, Giving or Sacrifice, but positively, Living in others, Consciousness of the universal life ; and this is "partaking the Divine nature." This is God's nature, to Give ; hence Creation, from which God is not absent and external, but in which He lives, "*Of* whom, and *through* whom, and *to* whom are all things." When God would show to our dim eyes His spiritual nature, and make us see that He is the Giver, He came in Christ, emptying Himself for our sake, giving Himself to death for us, as the Great Sacrifice. Nor Christ's life

nor death changed God, or God's thought to us, for God ever *is* love, the true love that gives, and that cannot selfishly take. But the Cross changes us individually, and gives us new thoughts of God, elevating us also to the glory and joy of self-sacrifice. But all such individual redemption must be very partial now, because truly Man is one, and cannot attain to his true condition—his normal condition, from which there is for some special reason a present lapse—until, while each retains his personal existence, he yet shares the universal life, and is filled with that joy for which for a time the individual parts are sacrificed. God's child, Man, like the Divine Son, Christ, who interprets our life, endures the Cross for the joy set in the future.—The application of this was simple. He lived the base life, the worse than wicked, the *inhuman* life, who served himself of others' good and happiness, and sacrificed others to himself. This is really the cannibal life, the inhumanity of which we as yet only perceive when men's bodies are devoured by savages, but which is only more monstrous when the hopes and happiness and goodness

of men are destroyed for our selfish ends. So, then, the true life is the Christ-life, the sacrificing ourselves for others; the only true life, because alone consistent with the actuality of creation, and with the nature of God, who in Giving is the Blessed for evermore."

It would be unreasonable to suppose that many of the hearers who were entranced with the impassioned eloquence with which this was set forth and amplified really understood at all definitely Armstrong's meaning. But, amongst others, perhaps old Boutell did, and he murmured to himself at the conclusion, "Though since my boyish days when I first read Hume I have not felt that any apology for Christianity made its truthfulness at all probable to me, yet Armstrong's way of putting things makes me disposed to believe. According to his view, Christianity is no longer opposed to Nature, but is harmonious with it, and interprets it. Old as I am, should he quite persuade me, I would willingly yield my devotion to a Christianity like that."

Helen, too, listened to this sermon as she never had to any before. It kindled within her a sub-

lime hope ; it was like the voice of the Spirit of God speaking in that valley of dry bones which she called, not her life, but her living death, and saying to the dead, Live ! Yes, it seemed possible that even for that hope in the goodness of God and of Life, which had seemed so utterly dead, there might be a resurrection. She had been sacrificed ; it had been her dread lot in life to give—to give her best, as God gave his best. Hers had been unconsciously, and all unwittingly, the Christ-life ; she had been made, in her measure, with the suffering Apostle of old, to “ fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for his body’s sake,”—for some unknown good which she would yet fully know when she—

“ Fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall,
Remerging in the general soul,”

and consciously feel the universal life.

Perhaps there were many others who deeply felt the power of that sermon. There was at least one other. To Lorissee also the words came as a divine illumination. The mists on which she had painted rosy visions of life, and which had

been slowly rising and breaking away of late, now seemed to vanish before sudden light from Heaven, leaving bare to her eyes the grand, wide, actual world, all the more fascinating to her because it was rough with hardships, and full of possibilities for flinging life away in impossible enterprises of heroism. The deep fires of her eyes blazed with enthusiasm; save once and again she dared not look up, but sat motionless while the floods of living fire rolled down upon her soul.

What was the interval between her and the man who sat by her side! Now and then, quite against his own will, he had been compelled by the magic of Armstrong's eloquence to notice the sense of what he was saying. "Pshaw," he mentally ejaculated, "what wild, impracticable nonsense! The man has got the blood of a fanatic in him." He felt, too, that there was something peculiarly offensive in Armstrong's remarks on civilized cannibals. But Ronald did not listen much; his mind was engaged on a matter of far more intense personal interest. He must make at once some plan for his treatment of



this woman, whose unexpected appearance had so excited him. And as he sat rigidly calm, his resolution was presently reached, and with all his usual caution. Doubtless this time, as usual, his special providence would assist in the execution of his plan. No time must be lost. Surely Helen knew of his arrival (Ronald knew both her names), yet it was odd she had chosen to come to this church. Did she suppose he would not know her, however thickly she might be veiled? Perhaps she was now concerting some plans of revenge. It would not do, however, he thought, to waste any time in attempting to discover what these were. He must adopt a plan that would overrule them, whatever they might be. How fortunate that he had brought over to England papers, medical and other, fully attesting the madness, and even an order from the asylum at Mâcon for her apprehension and restoration to their care. Really he deserved to succeed in everything for taking such admirable precautions always. What stupid or spiteful fate could it be that was now trying to interfere with his providence? He would go up to town to-

morrow morning,—if he went to-night it might raise suspicions,—get the papers, and proceed at once to the manager of a private asylum which he happened to know of, where lunatics were kindly treated, and kept very securely; and arrange to have the woman seized and removed on the Mâcon warrant, of course, and without any mention of his name whatever. It would be advisable, perhaps, for him to disguise his appearance for this call on the manager, give a false name, and arrange to have the thing done quietly, and without any possibility of dishonour to the Mossingford name. Should any unreasonable person—the man or the woman possibly with whom she was walking—be disposed to make a fuss about the affair, in blundering ignorance of the designs of his special providence, their mouth must be stopped with a golden sop. There was nothing unkind in all this, for doubtless the woman was still mad, he reflected, and would be much better taken care of in a proper establishment. And, damn the whole affair! it had caused him trouble enough already, and must now be settled up conclusively. For Lorissee's sake,

too, the uncomfortable piece of work must be done. And for the rest, evidently the world was not fashioned so that all could have what they liked in it. And this was not his fault. If he had made the world, he would have arranged to have his own way always, and let all others have theirs, and this he would have managed by the simple expedient of their never wishing anything in opposition to him.

Ronald therefore was quite relieved now that his plan was made. With great gentleness he gave his arm to Lorissee back to the Hall, taking care to delay their exit from the church till most of the congregation had left, and then asking Lorissee's permission to walk home by the route of the longer lane, that he might have the delight of hearing over again some of the remarks she made in Florence about the wild flowers of the hedgerows of old England. And, singularly, it was not Ronald that had to retire early through headache, but Lorissee; Ronald was never more pleasantly self-satisfied and agreeable than usual at the supper party, for he felt that the success of his plan was certain.

As for the preacher, as he walked homewards reflecting on what he had said in his sermon he thought within his soul, "At least God ought to be as good as this; there *ought* to be a meaning to the mystery of our human experience, and the meaning ought not to be less good than this. Let the good be as much better as an all-wise God can devise it; but no worse, if He be good! Would that my convictions were more free from uncertainty and doubt! If I have erred from the truth of things to-night, and have preached a God all-good to all, while the Ruler of the universe is a Jove of Might, then I make my appeal from the God who is, to the God who ought to be!"

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Dreadful is their doom, whom doubt has driven
To censure fate, and pious hope forego ;
Like yonder blasted boughs by lightning riven,
Perfection, beauty, life they never know,
But frown on all that pass, a monument of woe.”

Young.

It was, perhaps, a little surprising that Mrs. Jennings had not told the sorrowful stranger the news of the arrival of the family at the Hall, but really her old highly-cultivated faculty for gossip had been so little exercised of late that even this important event had occurred without being mentioned to her lodger. Another reason may have been that she knew Mrs. Smith was quite indifferent to everything that did not concern her child. However, on the Monday it happened

that some needle-work requiring especial care was brought from the Hall by one of the domestics ; Mrs. Clayton having recommended Mrs. Smith as a very excellent needlewoman. Mrs. Jannings brought the work up to her lodger's room. " Oh, Mrs. Smith, see as isn't all things turnin' out fortunite, for here's a lot of fine things as is to be done beautiful, an' you does it so well, and no one more so, as I says to the maid as brought it, as is as fine as if she was her missis, with her flounces and big crinnyline, as stuck in the doorway, as she says, ' Drat it ! as it is such a narrer one,' as I'm sure ain't true if it was her skirt she was a-talkin on ; and is bad words to say ' drat it !' and not fit for any lips as isn't as big and red as bits of steak as is the lips of that bounceable maid, as I says to my husband, says I, Tam, says I, that there fat, red maid, says I, is born a lady's-maid by mistake, says I, as was meant to have been born a washerwoman, or else the wife of a publikin."

Recovering breath, she continued, " And the pay is so good, and there's lots more of fine work as 'll want to be done where this comes from, as

is at the Hall, for the grand weddin' as is to be at the Mossingfords', as I says to Tam—— Why, lorks! Goodness gracious!" cried Mrs. Jannings, starting up, and clasping the hands of Mrs. Smith, who had been suddenly aroused at the mention of the Mossingfords' name from the half-pleased indifference with which she usually listened to the flights of Mrs. Jannings's eloquence. A most terrible expression of pain suddenly transformed the countenance of the poor creature. Tremblingly she drew back from Mrs. Jannings' soothing hands, and stood up at her full height, her eyes glaring wildly, and her hands reached, and fingers extended convulsively, as though she was tearing the heart out of some wild beast. For some moments she stood thus; then, as her eyes fell on her child, she snatched it up, and clasped it very close to her breast. "Oh, Noni, Noni," she murmured, "poor mother is so hurt; poor mother's heart breaks, and her brain reels. The old flames dart through me, and scorch my heart and scorch my brain. Ah, Noni! I wish we had died! And now what shall poor mother do? Mother's heart is so sad and so wild! Ah, Noni,

I cannot look on you ; the devil has come back to my soul, and my heart is so wicked—so wild ! ”

Then the poor creature turned to Mrs. Jannings, and said aloud, “ Oh, Mrs. Jannings, please take Noni away ; do please make haste. Oh, I feel so bad, so wretched ! Please leave me a little while.”

Mrs. Jannings immediately hastened away in great alarm ; the child setting up a low wailing. “ Oh dear, oh dear,” murmured the good woman to herself, “ what can be the matter with the poor creetur, as I’m sure I wouldn’t go for to offend her as is so awful wild, and never wuss than this blessed day as I was a-sayin’ as all things was a-turnin’ out fortunit, as so it is if people wouldn’t take on so, and if it was as I said ‘ weddin’,’ when perhaps the poor creetur didn’t have a weddin’, as God forgive me for thinkin’ so. Why some people is wuss as has weddings than them as is without, as is my opinion true, and I would say the same if I was a-goin’ to die this blessed minit, and would not care if Mrs. Jones, and twenty such, was to hear me, as I

used to say to Tam when we only lived in one room, as I ain't the woman to go and forget, as was all through Tam that I bore it so long. Oh my! how can I go and see that poor creetur agen, as is possessed with a lunatic, as we hears so beautiful on Sundays, as I'm afeard, and may God forgive me for thinkin' so, as I can't help it if she does want to murder me, lookin' so wild with her eyes and hands a-tearin', as I used to say to Tam, Tam says I, I can't only die once, says I, else I would to oblige you, says I; as he says, once is enough, says he; as I says, then I won't, says I."

By the time Mrs. Jannings had finished this long soliloquy, she felt a nervous anxiety to see if poor Mrs. Smith had become more composed. So she left little Noni with Polly, and ascended the stairs.

Mrs. Smith was seated again, and was apparently much calmer. But her voice was much agitated as she said, "Please tell me all you know of the Mossingfords, and about the wedding?"

"Yes, Mrs. Smith; and I'm glad you feel better,

as it's very bad to have spasms, as I knows myself, as used to have 'em bad, as was Tam's fault through the rows, as I was a-sayin' as the Hall has been done up and the family come back three weeks ago, and Mr. Ronald a few days ago, and he's to marry a tally-ann woman, as her name isn't Ann, though, and what the tally is I don't know, as I ain't had to do it, as allers bought my things reg'lar."

"You do not know when the wedding is to be?"

"No; but I've heard, before winter."

"What sort of lady is the Italian?"

"We all thinks very beautiful and good, as gives a lot of money to the poor, and talks very pleasant when you sees her, as ain't stuck up like some fine folks, as thinks they're a different sort of creeturs from us, and not made by God as the common folks is, as I says to Mrs. Clayton, says I, 'Yes, mam, says I, as you says very true we're all miserable sinners, says I, partic'lar in church, says I, the rich and the poor too.'"

"Now, dear Mrs. Jannings, please leave me to think a little; and you will take care of poor Noni?"

“Yes, Mrs. Smith, and I’m sure I’ll do anythink, and I hopes as I ain’t done nothink wrong to offend you?”

“Oh no, you are always so kind to me; but I have a great trouble to think over now.”

It was a great relief to poor Helen when Mrs. Jannings made her departure. Helen locked the door after her, and then threw herself prostrate on the floor. As she thought over all her misery, the old demons of rage and shame burst forth from their lurking-places in her soul, and made a fearful conflict-ground within her poor quivering body. She did not speak aloud nor groan, but now and again sent forth a low, piercing cry in the moments when her misery reached the extremity of endurable anguish. “And he is happy—happy in the love of some woman beautiful and good—is to marry her! No, it cannot be! Unless there is no devil as well as no God. Shall I go and tear his heart out? My arms are strong; I could strangle him as easily as I could poor Noni. But my hands would be polluted for ever! And God would help him, and he would trample on me, and laugh at my misery in scorn.

No, no ! I will go into the public streets and tell my wrong, that all men may hate him, and chase him away with curses. But they would take his part, and laugh at me. They have done evil too, and will call me mad, and lock me up again. No, no ! But I will go to this woman, beautiful and good, and will tell her, and her love will be turned to loathing, and she shall punish him. Yes, this woman shall be a woman's revenge."

She rose from the ground, bathed her face to remove the traces of her emotion, combed out her long tresses of gold, wound them close round her head that they might be well hidden under her bonnet, put on her largest shawl, then knelt down. "Darling mother, do help me now ! Move the heart of this woman, beautiful and good, that she may revenge me. Tell God not to help him this time. He has helped him enough. God won't listen to me ; darling mother, do not fail me ! I know you will not, if you are alive and can hear me." She then wrote a short note : "On business of the utmost moment, the bearer of this, a woman, prays to have a private interview



with you immediately. On no possible account must you refuse." Copying the card sent with the work from the hall, Helen directed her letter to Miss Cellini, and wrote outside "Private and urgent."

Then, fastening on her thick veil, Helen hastened down the stairs, kissed little Noni, told Mrs. Jannings that she would not be long, and made her way rapidly along the lane to the Hall. In her present dress, and with her head bent forwards, not even Ronald would have recognized her; but he had left for town by the first train, to attend, as he said, to some urgent Parliamentary business. The note was delivered to Loris, who directed the person to be shown at once into her private room. A few moments later, and she entered herself, and the women stood face to face.

Helen hastily threw off her shawl and bonnet, and shook down the heavy gold of her glorious hair. For an instant Loris lost all other thought in surprise at this sudden revelation of loveliness. Nothing could have become the woman better than the simple black dress, wholly unornamented,

indicating, rather than fitting well, her faultless figure, and forming the right background for the long waves of gold. But what an awful sadness was there in the beautiful pale features !

“Lady,” said Helen, gazing on the Italian, whose beauty her eyes felt, “I am beautiful too, but my beauty has been a dreadful curse to my life ; no, not my beauty, but the hellish passion of man.” Then rapidly she repeated her terrible tale—for the second time to human ears.

Lorisse had fallen to her knees, and, supporting her bending form by a chair, she tried to stay her thick tears of grief. Helen still stood and spoke on in a low voice of the most concentrated passion. Then reaching the end, she said, in tones suddenly changing, “And this man, who has blighted my life, dares to hope for your pure hand !”

“Ronald ?”

“Yes.”

The two women remained motionless, each so agitated with conflicting passions as to be scarcely conscious of the presence of the other. Then, without raising her eyes, Lorisse reached up her

hand—Helen took it—and Lorissee gently drew her down to her side. Helen's long gold fell over the dark bands of Lorissee's hair, and over her deep, rich cheeks, and the women put their soft arms around each other, one in a common shame, and in indignation against the foul wrong done to their womanhood.

When the passion of feeling gave way to thought, and thought grew definite, Lorissee was painfully conscious of a feeling which seemed to her selfish—a sense of relief in her own position through this terrible discovery. But she tried to think only of the poor creature at her side. “Poor Helen, I can say nothing to you. Your wrong is beyond comfort—unless there could be any remedy for you in the future from him who was to have been my husband.”

“And will not be now?”

“No.”

“And I,” said Helen, with fearful emotion, “could I bear to touch him, except to tear him limb from limb! You will hate him with human passion, but I hate him with the rage of hell! Remedy! There is none in the wide universe.”

"But he is different now ; and if he were penitent, and gave his name to you and the child—"

"Do not torture me ! What, willingly brand myself and the child with his name !"

"I will not say more, then ; life has no redress, nor, perhaps, alleviation for such misery as yours."

Helen could have wept at the tones of deepest sadness in which Lorissee spoke, but that the sweet fountains of tears were burnt dry by the heat of her passion.

Presently Lorissee gently drew the trembling woman to her couch, and sat by her side, cooling her forehead and hands with perfume. She made her eat a little, too, presently, and drink a little wine. Lorissee took lunch at the same time with her, but scarcely touched anything. She asked some questions tenderly about the child, and promised to do anything she ever could to serve poor Helen.

When they were quite calm, Lorissee asked Helen if any one else knew her history.

"Only Mr. Magney," and she explained how

he had aided her, and with what goodness he had tried to alleviate the wretchedness of her lot.

The mention of this name did not come strangely. Loris's thoughts had already many times reached to him.

"And Mr. Magney knows all?"

"All except the name of the man; he does not guess that."

"And you did not tell him that, because—"

"Because I did not expect them to come back to the Hall. I only came here to die by my mother's grave."

"And even Mr. Magney cannot raise any hope for you in your sorrow?"

"Sometimes, a little. Never so much as last night, when he preached."

"Then," thought Loris, "Ronald must have seen Helen last evening going to church, when he had that sudden start, and complained of headache."

"I felt then," Helen continued, "that there might be some hope in my life, though it is so dreadfully sacrificed, if God sacrifices Himself also. I thought long hours over it last night,

but all the comfort has gone from me now, and it seems less real than the stuff of a dream."

"But," said Lorissee very tenderly, "may we not hope that the shame of your life is only apparent, and that a glory of sacrifice shines in the inner truth of it? Do we not live in a world of shows,—very, very sad, but perhaps empty? Does it not seem as if there can be no giving without a proportionate receiving somewhere? And if any one has to lose, to give, her best—better than life and heaven—may it not be that there is a gain somewhere commensurate? Not to those who have wronged her,—curse must come to them,—but a gain to humanity, and, therefore, to ourselves again, if, as Mr. Magney says, we are to have a consciousness of all the gains coming from all our loss?"

"But then," answered Helen, for a while sufficiently unconscious of her own misery to think on the subject which had so interested her, "this would be to intensify the sufferings of the good infinitely. How you were distressed when I told you of myself, and how grieved you will always be at it! And think how simply intoler-

able it would be if you felt all the miseries now suffered in the world."

"Yes, judging human experience as it appears to our eyes. But if God is good, and all creation has come forth from Him, then the actual fact of our experience, of which we should become conscious, would be good too, and therefore joy." Lorissee had been studying the strange book recommended to her by Magney in one of their talks at the Hall.

"It may be so," replied Helen wearily; "I felt yesterday that I might possibly come to see things so, and have hope; but now all my old passion has come back, and no such thoughts are barriers against the flood. My wrong is too real, my life is too cursed; I can only hate and despair." Then the two women talked together concerning the future, but could arrange nothing satisfactorily. Lorissee promised to make some early opportunity for seeing Helen privately again, and then tenderly helped her to put up her hair, and arranged it carefully under the bonnet, and fastened her shawl; and then kissed her affectionately as they parted.

Quite alone, Lorissee could better reflect how her own course should now be shaped. Her engagement with Ronald must be broken off, for how could she ever respect him, or even regard him without loathing? All her womanly instincts impelled her to feel that his sin could never have forgiveness,—not from her. Yet might not this determination of hers force Ronald back into a dishonourable life? There could be no doubt of the powerful influence for good which she had exercised over him; had she any right to undo the work, and let him slide to ruin? Might he not be further elevated? She had talked glibly enough about self-sacrifice; ought she not to practise it? She had longed for some opportunity for spending all her life for the good of others; the opportunity had come quite close to her,—stood beseeching her, and with almost the command of duty. If the mode of the sacrifice was only unexpected, utterly repugnant, it was surely only a greater proof that God had accepted the offer of her self-devotement, and was willing to allow her the terrible privilege of giving her best too. Perhaps, as she feared, her influence

over Ronald might never raise him to unselfish nobleness,—the type of his character was apparently so contrary; yet this would have been only a seen good as the result of her life; and the vast continual sacrifice of all the world must be for some unseen good,—no perceived good was large enough to warrant it,—and, therefore, she ought to be ready to sacrifice herself thus utterly even without expectation of seeing in this life any good result. Would not Armstrong Magney thus counsel her? Oh that she could see him, and ask! But was she strong enough for such self-devotion? Might not some other giving-up of self for the world, less monstrous, be sufficient? Was it not even presumptuous to choose for herself the highest style of martyrdom?

It was a perplexed struggle for her, and she could come to no conclusion.

She sent down excuses from dinner, and gave her maid strict orders that no one, not even Mrs. Mossingford, should be admitted to her room.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Before the beginning of years,
There came to the making of man,
Time with a gift of tears,
Grief with a glass that ran,
Pleasure with pain for leaven,
Summer with flowers that fell,
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell.”

Algernon C. Swinburne, 'Atalanta in Calydon.'

As he made his way from the station that morning to his chambers near Pall Mall, Ronald Mossingford stopped his hansom at two shops, and bought a light-coloured overcoat and a white hat. Then, when he had selected and carefully arranged the papers concerning Helen's madness, he proceeded to make some slight changes in his personal appearance. He parted his black hair in the centre, and with pomade Hongroise got it



to stay down pretty well over the sides of his temples ; and he succeeded in making his moustache stay up over his lips,—it showed their thickness unpleasantly, and altered his appearance considerably, but, for his present purpose, so much the better. Then, not forgetting a roll of notes, he made his way hastily out again, called another cab, drove to Charing Cross, and took a return ticket for the suburban station Statham. The rail journey was not long, nor the distance to the private asylum far, and he had the good fortune, of course, to find Mr. Price disengaged, and ready to see him privately in his office. The business was soon understood definitely enough. The papers were in due order, and quite sufficient for the immediate apprehension of the poor mad creature. Perhaps, for family reasons, it would be just as well that no mention of his name, Mr. James Johnson, should be made ; any letters, however, might be addressed to him at Morley's Hotel. As the woman's fits were so wild, some urgency was advisable. Indeed, could she be safely lodged in Myrtle House within forty-eight hours, he

would willingly pay an extra £50 note for the incidental expenses that would be thus incurred.

Mr. Price's best pains should not be spared. He had had to do before with difficult and dangerous cases.

"Yes," returned Mr. James Johnson, "I assure you there is an extreme probability of her doing some fatal injury to one who is very dear to me; hence my anxiety. We have been very kind to her, and hoped that her madness had entirely given way under our gentle treatment; but these late paroxysms prove that the taint of the madness is as deep as ever. She raves again, too, as you see from these papers she used to do at Mâcon, about all sorts of dreadful crimes, poor thing; and then wildly moves her hands as if she were tearing things to pieces, just in the old way. But all this would not be so bad if it were not for her murderous attempts."

Mr. Price did not know how much of all this was true, and did not wish to know. It was quite clear that the woman was mad, and that was enough. He never received any one without proper medical authority, and he treated all

whom he did receive as mad, without any sort of further inquiry: it would have been disrespectful to the faculty. And he treated all his patients very kindly, and kept them very securely. There had never been any escapes from Myrtle House, except through the grave; and these escapes had never troubled either him or his patrons, and it was not very likely they ever would, so he hoped; but he was in the habit of repeating on Sundays, "I look for the resurrection of the dead."

Well, however that might all be, Mr. James Johnson was a very good business-like talker and arranger, and Mr. Price only wished that all his clients could have talked as he did, and have shown that it was motives of the purest benevolence that made them wish to send their relatives and friends to his care. Mr. Price could not help regarding Mr. James Johnson with some slight admiration.

Reaching chambers again, the disguises were quickly removed, and, after Ronald Mossingford had given his attention to several matters of small consequence, he hastened to catch a train for Ha-

merton, and arrived at the Hall before dinner. He felt that he must not be away now, in case, for the lack of the general's presence, the enemy might gain some unhindered advantage. He was vexed that Lorissee's headache prevented him having the pleasure of her company.

There were not many things about which Mr. Price felt quite sure in this puzzling world, but one was that the writing on bank-notes was both very intelligible and very delightful reading. A book, all the leaves of which had been fifties, would have been worth more in his eyes than Plato and Aristotle, and Bacon and Newton, and Kant and Comte, and perhaps Moses and John into the bargain. So he was quite determined to save, if possible, the promised fifty. He would spare at once two of his best assistants without any loss of time. The directions were soon given, and the two men reached Hamerton by an earlier train than Ronald. His directions—written, for he liked to guard against mistakes, but in a large feigned hand, for he was too cautious to give his own—enabled the men to proceed direct from the station across the fields to the new street, where

they easily found "The Pansies." As the men were instructed to make the capture of the escaped mad woman as quietly as they could, and if possible unobserved, they quickly observed the place, but deferred entering. Then they noticed that a capital post of observation for them would be the small remnant of a thicket, almost opposite "The Pansies," which had not been cut down yet to make way for the houses. The houses on the south side had been built first, and on the other side the street had been commenced at the end nearest the town, and away from "The Pansies." It was a hot afternoon, and the two men agreed that they could not enjoy it more pleasantly than by smoking a pipe under the shade of the clump of trees in the centre of the thicket.

"Well, Bill, I considers this a delightful mixture of pleasure and business. I always was fond of half-and-half, and I wouldn't mind having a pint of it now." Thus saying, Mr. Jim Smike gradually allowed himself to reach a prostrate position on the piece of turf the most free from nettles and insects which he could find under

the shade. Bill, who was of a bigger make, with tremendous broad shoulders, had rolled himself down somewhere with less carefulness.

"Ah, Bill, this here is the fust time you've had the distinguishable honour of being engaged in a case of fust-rate importance. Why, it's almost as exciting as the cases you reads of in the papers of elopements and run-away marriages, only our house is rather a rum sort of a church to bring a woman to, eh?"

"I won't say as you mayn't be right there," returned Bill, very dispassionately.

"Only, perhaps, them that gets to us is like the run-away sly marriages; they'd be precious glad, some of 'em, if they could run away the other way back again,—eh, Bill?"

"Ah, maybe yes."

"Only they can't, you know, Bill! The door of marriage is as tight as the door of Myrtle, or as parson says the door of a uncomfortable place is, eh?"

"Yes, I don't say as it isn't."

"By Satan, it ain't, though; for there is the divorce way out of marriage, like a back-door;

and who's to know that there ain't a back-door to the parson's place, eh?"

"Ah!"

"But there's a back-door out of Myrtle, too! I forgot that; a way down through a long hole, eight foot by three, and ten deep, or thereabouts; by Satan, that there is,—eh, Bill?"

Mr. Jim Smike was of rather a religious turn of mind. This is why, after mature deliberation, he had chosen this peculiar form of adjuration for emphatic assertions. Ordinary swearing he was much averse to; and all use of the Divine name was contrary to the third commandment. But yet some sort of a good round awful kind of word was wanted, and as he did not know what other service Satan was in the world, he thought it was fair enough that he should be made this slight use of.

"Lots of 'em as honours us by taking up their abode under the Myrtle is mad enough, there ain't no doubt; and perhaps all of them is. I shouldn't wonder. And if it comes to that, some of them is too as sends 'em. How queer they looks when they comes to see 'em. As far as

looks go, they looks queerer than the mad uns—eh, Bill?”

“ Well, I don’t say but what you are very near the mark—very near the mark.”

“ Why, some of ’em looks sensible as is reg’lar mad, and no mistake. There’s your man, number five, that would only keep from tearing his breeches into ribbons by being promoted to be a captaining; and now, how sensible he looks with a broomstick, doing duty, so proud of his red coat; and ain’t he mad, eh?”

“ I won’t say that I dispute it.”

“ But he ain’t so mad as number eight, as is in my wife’s part. Why, she does nothing all day long but keep stitching up little bits of clothes for a baby, and says she’ll never get ’em done in time, and she’s been hard at it three year. By the bye, that’s a capital plan, having the odd numbers men, and the even numbers women; it helps you to remember better. Only, I think the women should have had the odd numbers, ’cos they are the oddest creeturs,—eh, Bill?”

“ Well, I won’t say but what you may be right there too.”



“By Satan! Bill, look along the field! See that woman coming down the lane! She’s just the height, ‘five feet four and a half.’ I could swear to half an inch if it was not wicked; ‘form elegant;’ ‘dress plain-black, most likely;’ ‘thick veil, if with bonnet on.’ There, she’s turning this way, as if for The Pansies. I’ll cross over, and meet her, and look at her hair, and if it is yellow, it’s her! and you’ll know by me taking off my hat behind her, in token of respect to her, eh? And you’ll have ready the straps, becos she’s so wild, and we shall get the extry guinea apiece.”

The pipes were struck into their pockets. Jim Smike crossed over rapidly, pried rudely into the woman’s bonnet, noticed the “face pale and beautiful,” and “hair golden,” and raised his hat, and followed her softly. Bill, too, had now crossed over, and entered the lane, and when he was within a yard of the unsuspecting Helen, Smike suddenly threw his arms round her neck, and thrust a gag into her mouth at the instant she commenced a cry of alarm. At the same moment Bill took firm hold of her bodily,

grasping the arms, and forcing them behind her. The struggles of the poor creature were furious, but unavailing; the arms were fixed behind, and then as she continued her fearful plunges her lower limbs were also loosely strapped, and the men in haste carried her over the field to the station. They took her at once into one of the smaller waiting-rooms, and kept firm hold on her palpitating frame. The people who happened to come in during the hour they waited for the up-train, did not feel sufficiently interested in mad people to care to see her fearful convulsions of body, and to meet the gleaming wildly-appealing eyes. It was terrible that one of God's creatures should ever have had to endure such an hour—long as ages, dark as hell. Pitiful unspeakably that one of the children of the All-mighty, one of the purest of them, should have had to suffer such concentrated agonies. And this was only another hell-hour in her life, succeeding many, and to be followed by more.

Smikey took first-class tickets; the carriages were conveniently padded, and it was a legitimate luxury for mad-people who were frantic.



Then he asked the guard to allow them a compartment to themselves, and showed him the papers for the woman's apprehension and removal. The guard, in his kindness, assisted to put her in;—how often in life, maybe, are we all equally kind! He shuddered at sight of the poor creature, and felt how dreadful it was to be insane if it caused such an expression of agony. Though it hurt his heart to see her, yet the guard came up frequently to the carriage window during the journey, and was glad to find that her excitement grew less. In fact, her misery utterly overbore her physical powers, and she could struggle no more through very weakness. At the station she was lifted quietly enough into a fly, and conveyed to Myrtle House.

CHAPTER XV.

“How piteous is powerless pity! And how despicable the despite that tortures the pitiful and weak! Earth has many strange sights, but none more wonderful than that of useless agonies bewept by loving eyes that see nor remedy nor relief.”
—*Dyson Brooke.*

MEANWHILE Mrs. Jannings had awaited, in a state of extreme anxiety, the return of her strange lodger, Mrs. Smith. Hour after hour passed, and the shades of night fell, and her alarm deepened. “And all turnin’ out so fortun-it,” she wonderingly soliloquized, keeping her hands engaged in rubbing the new furniture, for she found her fingers were too restless to go on with any of her sewing; “all turnin’ out so fortun-it, if people wasn’t so perwerse, as I used to say to Tam, Tam, says I, what’s the use

of goin' on so, says I,—lorks ! how wild she did look when I said 'weddin',' as I didn't go to offend her,—well, says I, Tam, says I, how can a woman have everythink clean, says I, when we only lives in one room, says I,—wherever can she be got to ? She's gone and drowned herself, as is so perwerse, as things was a-goin' too fortunite, as she had plenty of work, and a beautiful house like this here, as is a palass after livin' in one room, as what Tam means I can't tell a-callin' it a Paradise regained, as is better than the Paradise lost, as Paradise Row ain't lost, as it was there this blessed mornin', as I says to Tam, Tam, says I, but he says to me, little wifey, says he, then it's a pity as the Row isn't lost, says he, for it ain't much credit to creation, says he, and if it was lost, says he, not even the devil would care to find it agen, and pick it up,—and yet maybe, says he, and very tender-like he spoke, says he, 'maybe the Good Shepherd would go after it until he found it, says he ;—as I hopes the Good Shepherd—and God forgive me for takin' the blessed words on my sinful lips—'ll go after this poor wild Mrs. Smith, as is gone so

queer ; as is time to put the children to bed, a hour ago, bless their little hearts.”

The children were by no means desirous of being put to bed. They always got on excellently together, and had been enjoying the afternoon on the floor immensely. Polly was prodigiously pleased at such a long opportunity of pulling the little Noni about, brushing his curly hair with a piece of paper, making elaborate calculations of the number of his fingers or toes, and gently biting the little creature, or kissing it, as either mode seemed to her the best for prosecuting her investigations into this mysterious puzzle of humanity. Bites and kisses,—so the world had begun to Helen’s poor child, as to the rest of us ; happy if we do not get quite eaten up before the kissing time comes ;—though, perhaps, it is equally disagreeable to be eaten up afterwards. However, in this case, even Polly’s bitings were so kind, that they gave the poor little creature rather the idea of petting ; and perhaps, like some older folk, he could not have quarrelled with the large-eyed little woman even if it had been her pleasure to have gobbled him up utterly.

Polly had an especial objection to being put to bed. She was never suffered to reach that land of promise, downy slumbers, without passing through a Jordan of washing. In the morning and evening scene, when Mrs. Jannings prepared the floods, Polly contributed the thunders, and there was usually a terrible storm; that cleared up, however, as soon as Mrs. Jannings held up the little white chemise—a flag of truce in the war. “Bless the child! what lungs she has got, as ’ll be very useful if she ever has a husband like my Tam, as ’ll want shoutin’ at, as he used to, as I could never shout loud enough to overbear him, though I had got good lungs too, as I used to say to Mrs. Swile, my dear, says I, as we were very thick friends when we lived in one room, as I ain’t going to grow proud and forget, though we has a country house now, as is what Mr. Magney meant when he said as you must keep Polly very clean and tidy, said he, that blessed mornin’, ’cos, said he, she comes from the country, and now I knows that the country is so much dirtier than the streets, for there the dirt is never more than two inch, or three inch, but

here it's deeper than the spades, and in my opinion is all dirt, specially the turmut fields, as is what Mr. Magney meant, 'cos he knowed that bein' from the dirty country Polly would be fond of dirt, as that she is, bless her little heart, and not be fond of washin'."

But when the children were finally tucked up in their little beds, Mrs. Jannings became the more anxious in the lonely silence, and could do nothing but start up at the supposed sound of footsteps, open the door, and then return to sit by the window watching.

Tam was sure to be late. For, first, as long as it was light he remained in the new church at overwork. Early and late he was there now, for he had been promoted to carve some of the Gothic capitals of the octagonal aisle-columns, and was entirely fascinated with his higher employment. His well-trained hand had long learned a rare fidelity of execution, and now his aroused intelligence directed the hand to create things of beauty. That Monday he had gathered poppies out of the wheat-field as he passed to work, and had arranged four of them, with their

leaves, against one of the near columns as copy ; two full poppy-heads just meeting at the angle, and two, also just meeting, with heads bent over, showing their under petals, in the centre of each octagonal, the leaves forming the background. He worked hard at this all day, with a flush of high delight, for art's sake, and for the appreciation which he expected to receive from Mr. Magney and others. Then Tam went up to the Workmen's Club, to glance over the papers, before coming back to a late "meat-tea." To-night he was detained longer than usual, in consequence of news brought by the 'Arabia'—news very displeasing to Tam—of an invasion of Maryland by 50,000 Confederates, under the personal command of Lee it was supposed, and who were now threatening Baltimore, and filling Washington and even New York with alarm. The same advices reported that Sherman had occupied the right bank of the Chattahoochee, Johnson retiring before him in the direction of Atlanta. Tam remained long, comparing the various comments on the news in the 'Times' and 'Daily News.'

When, about ten o'clock, Mrs. Jannings heard

her husband's heavy step on the pathway, she rushed hastily down and even got outside the little garden gate to meet him with her excited tale.

"She's gone ! as I've been waitin' fit to kill myself with worrit all this blessed day and night, as it's too bad, unless she's drowned herself, poor thing, as looked so awful wild, and never said even good bye as she might have done if she meant to drown herself, as we've been so kind to her, as if she was my own sister, as I'd swear to if I was a-goin' to die this blessed minit."

"What, Mrs. Smith gone ! When ? Where to ?"

"Oh lorks, there ain't no knowin', unless she's gone to where she come from, as there's no knowin' where that is neither, as is dreadful worritin', as I says to myself, says I—"

"Now, wifey, answer quick,—when did she go ? and did she take the child ?"

"No, Tam, and bless his little heart, as he's asleep beautiful after I washed him as didn't make a noise like Polly,—and don't speak so sharp, Tam, as if I hadn't been a frettin' all day till you come, as didn't know what to do with

the wild creetur' gone, and now, instead of helping me, you begins to blow me up, as if I'd drove her away, as is too bad, Tam"—and the poor little over-excited woman began to cry.

"Now, little wifey, don't be a little silly," said Tam, stooping down, and giving the little woman a kiss—they got over their quarrels better now. And then Tam lifted her right up in his strong arms, and carried her in-doors.

"There, now; I'll just take a piece of bread-and-cheese in my hand, for I'm dreadful hungry, and go and look after the woman."

"But, Tam, won't you sit down and just eat a bit of this beautiful supper as I've got ready for you? It is in the oven, all hot; it won't take you a minit. You musn't kill yourself with hunger, as what would I do, and Polly, as would cry her eyes out if you didn't kiss her o' mornins, as it's too bad for everybody to murder themselves at once, and may God forgive me for thinking it of Mrs. Smith, as did look dreadful wild though."

Rather than annoy the sensitive little woman, who had brought from the oven a pie which she

feared was a little too much baked, Tam sat down to a hasty supper, and assured his pleased wife that the taste was even better than the extremely delicious smell. Then he sallied forth on his fruitless quest. He walked along by the side of the river Hamer a good way, several times fancying that he saw a dead body with streaming yellow hair borne along on the spectral-looking waves. At eleven o'clock he returned to The Pansies, to inquire if Mrs. Smith had yet returned, and then crossed some streets to Magney's lodgings, to consult with him, if he were still up.

The light was still burning in Magney's study. He sat at his desk with the miserable side drawer open, and a number of yellow-covered books and pamphlets spread about, some open, some shut. He had not been reading much, however, that night, but had been writing out an ominous list of reasons why he should, for a time at least, abandon his position as a religious teacher. Just now he was thinking over the reasons on the opposite side, and making notes of these also, but the list was far scantier than the former.

He was disturbed by a knock. Hastily putting back the pamphlets, he desired Mr. Jannings to be shown in. On hearing the cause of Tam's anxiety, Mr. Magney instantly rose to accompany him home and see his wife. Their quick steps soon crossed the distance.

"It is very strange indeed, Mrs. Jannings, and you have shown great kindness and ability," said Mr. Magney, after listening quite patiently to the little woman's talk, "and now please answer me very carefully one or two questions."

"Did she leave before dinner?"

"Yes, for I happened to look at the clock as Tam—"

Armstrong held up his finger, and Mrs. Jannings stopped. In this emergency time might be precious.

"Now try to remember whether anything had happened at all unusual this morning."

"No, Sir, not unusual, 'cos it's usual for her to have work brought for her as does it so beautiful."

"Then some work was brought this morning?"

"Yes, Sir, from one of the big servants, as has a big red face, from the Hall."

"And it was just after you gave this to her that she became so excited? Now, think, do you remember anything she said?"

"She asked me to take away the child, and looked dreadful wild, as I ain't a woman to mind other people's tempers, though Tam used to try me very hard, as I used to say to him—"

"Yes, and then she said to you?"

"As I must tell her all I know'd about the people, and then I told her about the weddin', and she screamed a little, as I'm sure I didn't go for to hurt her feelins, and it ain't fair as I should be considered as if I'd drove her out of the house as had treated her as my own sister." The little woman looked tearful again.

Armstrong felt that he had the clue now. He said very gently to Mrs. Jannings, "I consider you have behaved in a most admirable manner in this difficulty. And may God, who pities the wretched, abundantly bless you and your hus-

band for all your goodness to this poor creature. Now I think you had better leave this affair to me, and get to rest, because both you and your husband have duties waiting you to-morrow."

Magney's night was restless enough. He thought on the terrible decision that now seemed imminent, if he would be sternly conscientious, of giving up the spiritual work to which he had devoted himself. Then he thought on the possibility of Lorissee becoming free from her engagement when she knew that her cousin had stained his life with such a crime; for putting together the circumstance of Helen's coming to this town of Hamerton, and her excitement at the mention of Ronald's marriage, and the report of his former wildness, Armstrong easily concluded that Ronald Mossingford was the man who had cursed poor Helen's life. Now, if this supposition were right, could Lorissee marry Ronald? Would not her love for him utterly vanish? And then—But perhaps her noble spirit, great enough for any heroism, might lead her to devote herself to Ronald, to help him in his good resolves, for he

was changed now, and to complete the work of his elevation. And this would be her right course, surely.

When at last he fell asleep, he was frequently startled into wakefulness by hideous dreams. He was preaching in his new church, and was compelled to say right out all his dark doubts in the hearing of the people: with loud curses on his impiety they rushed to the doors, leaving him one solitary hearer, who clapped hands, and danced, grew bigger, gathered distinctness, and turned out to be the devil, who, leaping forwards, caught up the preacher, and bore him struggling away.—In a paradise of beauty, the loveliest of women,—with deep dreamy eyes, and broad bands of dark hair gathered back from marble temples, and crowned with deep roses, not so lovely as the roses of her cheeks,—held out arms to him, entreatingly; but he found himself slowly drawn away towards a precipice by a line of silk, until he took the final step and plunged over into fathomless gloom.

The mysterious darkness enfolded many another weary bewildered brain that night, bringing no

visions from God, and giving no place with the morning's dawn to a dawn of hope and good.

Yet at length shall not every darkness yield to full day before the power of Him "who turneth the shadow of death into the morning"?

CHAPTER XVI.

“God made him, and therefore
Let him pass for a man.” *Merchant of Venice.*

QUITE early the next morning Armstrong called at The Pansies, but found that nothing had been seen of the lost woman. Then he went to the printing-office and left an urgent order, and then proceeded straight to Mossingford Hall. He sent in his card to Mr. Ronald Mossingford, begging a brief interview immediately. He was ushered into the library, where Ronald was sitting, apparently examining some papers. Ronald felt singularly uneasy. He had seen nothing of Lorisette since Sunday evening, and feared that the cause of her unexplained indisposition might have some connection with the woman he had

noticed that night. Yet how could she have received any information? No one had called on her except some milliner or seamstress. Good heavens, if that seamstress should be Helen! No! an adverse providence would not surely take so mean an advantage of his absence. How could he have thought out his plan more rapidly, or have put it in train more quickly? It would not be fair for him to lose his game so easily, and be mated by discovery in such a simple fashion. Had the devil got loose, that he was becoming involved in such perplexities? Ronald, too, was up early, for he did not sleep well that night. And now there was this fanatical clergyman coming, perhaps to complicate matters still more. "Show him in!" said Ronald to the man, with feeling as intense, but not so agreeable, as if he had said "shove him in," and the mouth of hell had been close by.

"My business, though of importance, need not detain you long, Mr. Mossingford," said Magney, taking a seat at once directly opposite Ronald, and fixing on him his clear full eyes. "It has come in the way of my duties to take some small

care of a poor woman of very remarkable appearance—pardon me mentioning this; she has pale beautiful features, and magnificent gold hair.” Armstrong was not sure that there was the slightest change of expression in Ronald’s eyes.

Mossingford was determined to keep his own counsel, and betray no emotion; he replied with slight irony, “It is interesting to find that clergymen in the discharge of their duties can take such particular notice of their flock.”

Armstrong went straight on in the same cool incisive way in which he had commenced. “This woman lately told me her history. She had been foully robbed by one who calls himself a gentleman; no mean thief in the night was ever such a dastardly scoundrel as this civilized cannibal who robbed Helen of what was worth more than a million of his lives.”

“Damn your impudence, Sir!” cried Ronald, starting up, and shaking his fist close to Armstrong’s face. “You shall suffer for this insult!” Ronald, in his sudden passion, had forgotten his resolution.

“Thank you,” coolly replied Armstrong.

"You have now supplied the last link in the chain of connection. The poor creature had carefully abstained from mentioning the name of the gentleman; but I wished to know it for a special reason."

Ronald repented his blunder. But, even now, how gladly would he smash his fist into the face of this man, who was the first who had dared to call the old crime by such harsh names! But he must, if possible, learn more of the enemy's tactics, and take a full revenge when he had opportunity.

"Yesterday this woman was forcibly carried away from the place." It was a bold guess, but a right one, thought Armstrong, as he observed a light of satisfaction flash for an instant in the eyes he was watching. "I mean to find out where she is, and will leave no influence unused that may aid me. I want your help."

Ronald smiled a contemptuous defiance.

"I do not care to use a threat," Armstrong went on, "but listen. At this moment bills are being printed, describing the woman, and offering a reward for any information that may lead

to her recovery. It will be a pity for you to let the affair become public gossip. Further, it is possible that Miss Cellini, were she informed of her history and disappearance, might insist on knowing of the fate of this unhappy woman, and you may well consider it advisable to prevent this."

"And why the devil should you interfere?"

"Is it not as lawful for shepherds to 'interfere' with the sheep, as for wolves?"

"Damn your insulting tongue, and your meanness in taking advantage of me!"

"Sir, I will overlook your rudeness, but I would venture to advise you not to talk much about 'meanness in taking advantage.'" Then, after a pause, Armstrong continued in a milder tone, "Perhaps I am wrong in speaking as I have, for I am not as God, to judge you; but it is natural to feel a strong indignation, and you have not shown any regret. But I must remember that I am human too, and if I had been tempted as you, I might too have fallen. However, the question now concerns the present, not the past."

Mossingford began to think that this strange

conscientious clergyman might be of use to him, instead of proving a hindrance. So he said, "You have wronged me at least in one thing. I had not the least idea that the woman was missing. I am willing to take oath, or give my word as a gentleman, that I did not know that she was not here still. But I can guess how it may have happened. Not very long ago she was confined in a lunatic asylum; she may not have told you this—"

Armstrong bowed his head.

"Ah, well; she made her escape, and since then their agents have been seeking her. It is likely that they may have found her here, and have removed her."

"Then we will send advertisements of the real state of the case to all the papers, and the agents will see their mistake."

"Impracticable fool!" thought Ronald; "why, that would be worse than the placards." Then aloud he said, hesitatingly, "But perhaps she is still mad; she was wildly mad in France, poor creature; and if so, would it not be better to leave her in the agents' care?"

“ Good God ! how much better any hell of suffering, than a hell of baseness like that ! ” thought Armstrong ; and he again felt that, despite his assurance on the honour of a gentleman, Ronald was implicated in the removal of Helen.

He quietly replied, however, “ If she is mad, we will see that she is kindly cared for ; but *if* she is, she has been driven mad since yesterday morning. Will you be kind enough to give me the names of several agents, or of others to whom I may telegraph at once for information about the woman ? ”

“ I have informed you, Mr. Magney, that I know nothing of her removal yesterday. She may have drowned herself, for aught I know. It was only a surmise of mine that she may have been recovered by the agents I spoke of.”

“ Precisely. That is quite what I understood. But the surmise seems such a reasonable one, that it is quite worth while telegraphing to some of the agents.”

“ You are right, Mr. Magney ; so I will go and do so at once, unless you have any further business with me.”



Armstrong reflected that it would be useless to insist further. It would be so easy for Ronald to give names of persons who would know nothing about the woman, reserving the addresses of those who were concerned in removing her. So he replied, "No, I have no further business with you this morning, Mr. Mossingford. Only, shall I trouble you to let me know the result, or shall I call again in two hours?"

"Oh, I will send you word;" and Ronald again rose from his seat, as did Armstrong, and held out frankly his hand, saying, "Despite this miserable affair of the past, I trust we shall be friends, Mr. Magney."

Armstrong could not, at that instant, take the foul hand. He drew back.

Nothing, perhaps, could have stung Ronald more keenly. He reddened with shame. "It is hard," he presently said, "how one bad deed will drag evil consequences after it so long" (yes, thought Armstrong, with the agonies of Helen in his mind), "even to this day, when I have long been another man. I had gone to Florence from Oxford, where I was in with a dreadful wild set;

none of us had been taught to consider the honour of a waiting-girl as of so much account—of course I know better now—and then, really, the girl was fearfully beautiful, and I had no command of my passion. I was like a man dying of hunger close to food fit for the gods; he must eat; he cannot think of consequences. I know it was wrong. I would give worlds to undo it. I have suffered terribly in consequence already. And I would never have done it if I had known Lorissee then. I only wanted a pure passion to keep my heart clear of evil ones. I love her with all my soul, and would do anything for her sake. I did not mean to have said this. Good-day.”

This time Armstrong held out the hand. After all, was not he mortal too, and sinful—part of the common humanity, so one with it that all its sins and shame were his?

When the door closed behind Armstrong, Ronald fell back in his chair to think. In this miserable complication of affairs it was difficult to plan for the best. However, by the time he had taken breakfast—he ordered it to be brought to his study—he had made his determination. He wrote



a note, to be delivered in two hours' time to Mr. Magney, informing him that in answer to his inquiries by telegraph, he had discovered that his surmise had been correct ; that on the warrant of some French asylum she had been recaptured, and that upon this information he had at once sent orders to a confidential business agent of his own in town, to undertake an immediate investigation into the whole affair. He would send Mr. Magney further particulars as soon as he knew. Of course, therefore, the publication of the notice-bills, or making any public mention of the affair, yet, was wholly unnecessary, and he should rely on Mr. Magney's discretion as a minister, and honour as a friend, to prevent such an annoyance.

Of course the woman's sudden disappearance must be due to Mr. Price's extreme rapidity of action. But if not, he could easily make out that his agent in town had supposed the inquiries were made of some other woman—perhaps named Smith ; it was not an uncommon name even for mad people. His providence might have been taking a better care of his interests than he ima-



gined. There was the not altogether unpleasant probability, that, sufficiently disgusted at last with a world where she made things decidedly disagreeable for him just now, she might have taken a sudden departure for a better, making a very convenient application of the doctrine of self-sacrifice to which she had listened better than he had last Sunday. While there is life there is hope, thought he, about himself; and when there is death there is sometimes more hope, thought he, about Helen.

It would therefore, be better for him to undertake another rapid journey to town and call at Myrtle Hall, to assure himself that the woman was in safe-keeping, and then as he journeyed up he must further plan what to do with the child. Damn the whole business! it was causing him far too much trouble. Why on earth could not they have let her drown in the Arno, when she wanted to, and tried so hard? If a man is dissatisfied with England, and wants to go to America, why should you stop him? And if a woman is dissatisfied with this world, and wants to go to the devil, why should she be hindered? He never

wanted to be unkind to her ; he would rather have been kind to her now than not ; but if a little vessel stands in right across a man-of-war, whose fault is it if the war-vessel cuts her through and passes on over her ?

CHAPTER XVII.

"For how hard it seemed to me,
 When eyes, love-languid through half-tears, would dwell
 One earnest, earnest moment upon mine,
 Then not to dare to see! When thy low voice,
 Faltering, would break its syllables to keep
 My own full-tuned,—hold passion in a leash,
 And not leap forth and fall about thy neck,
 And on thy bosom (deep-desired relief!)
 Rain out the heavy mist of tears, that weighed
 Upon my brain, my senses, and my soul."

Tennyson, 'Love and Duty.'

SUCH early visitors were unusual at Mossingford Hall. The clang of the swinging gate, and the echo of Magney's footsteps, borne on the still morning, when the stir of the Hall life had hardly commenced, had attracted the attention of Loris's maid, and she told her young mistress of the unusual visit being made to Mr. Ronald, when she came in to arrange her hair.

“Then, Zomille, listen, child. That clergyman is very, very good, as good as your Padre Berlazza at Florence ; and I am not well, and in trouble. So, go down, and stand near the passage, and if he goes along the hall alone, say to him to come with you, and follow you. And if any one is with him to the hall-door, speak nothing, but go round the lawn, and if he is then alone, speak to the good Padre, and say to him to come with you to the side-door, by the shrubbery, and lead him that way to my studio. Zomille, do you understand ? And then, child, when we are there, stay in the outer room and tell your beads, till I call you ; and then I will be very pleased with you, and take you back to Florence one day.”

The dark-eyed Florentine gracefully lifted to her lips the end of one of the crimson bands with which she had just fastened up her young mistress's hair, and at once disappeared, to do her bidding.

She had not to wait long ; and when Mr. Ronald's study opened, with quick tact she preceded Mr. Magney, as if to wait upon him to the hall-

door. Then, having heard the study-door close, she lifted her finger to her lips, and said to Mr. Magney, "Signorina says she must see you." Then, turning down a corridor, she ushered him through an anteroom into Loris's studio.

Leaving him a few moments, she went to tell her mistress, and to be praised as a good child. When she returned with Loris, she took her place by the anteroom door, and obediently commenced repeating her prayers.

Loris's countenance bore traces of great agitation; she spoke, however, in firm tones, but very low. "I do not know how I can consult you, Mr. Magney; and yet I greatly need wise counsel. In England I am alone, for I dare not just now listen to the advice of my aunt or—cousin."

"I shall be most glad if I can render you the least service. You may command me as a minister of the Church, whose duty it is to help all her children in their difficulties."

"Yes, I know I may rely on you. I consult you as a minister of the wonderful God, who knows His will, and can show me the right path."



“I have very little light, but I will faithfully advise you according to that little.”

“I have seen poor Helen. She came here yesterday. I do not think any one here knows who it was that called. She told me her dreadful history, and she said that the man was—my cousin.” Lorisse’s beautiful hands were clasped over her face; but Armstrong did not look at her.

“She had not told you that — — Now this woman has been fearfully sacrificed for him; would it not be a crime if another were, though in a different manner? I want to open my soul to the divine life, and give up self utterly for my suffering race; but surely God is not calling on me to give up myself to a life that would be less sweet than a corrupting tomb? A living sacrifice should not be offered up, surely, linked with one putrefying? Good God, what am I saying! But my passion blazes against my cousin’s crime. But yet, I know, he is much altered, and may alter more. But how could I stand up in my purpose for God, if the fatal link were fastened? I am not strong enough



in good to stand alone, much less so fearfully weighted."

Armstrong felt that her deep eyes were lifted now on him, and his soul was stirred to its depths by the power of the unseen, but felt, appealing glance. How he could now fling himself at her feet, declare his passion, give up all his soul to her, while together they devoted life to the good of the world. To the world what gain might come ; to himself what bliss ! What did he not owe her for thus daring to confide in him ! for her humbleness in thus placing herself as for his acceptance,—for so, at this moment, he took the meaning that lay beneath her words,—for whom he would give life and heaven,—yet, yet, whom he must not dare to think of for a moment as his own.

In the last moment of consciousness, it is said, the drowning wretch sees the vision of his whole life. Such a wide moment had come to Armstrong now, ere he, too, died to hope and life. For the sake of that mean-souled Ronald he must forego his bliss. Ronald needed her influence. It was essential to his salvation from vice, and



from his native meanness. But to him had been given, Magney felt, the fatal strength of being able to stand alone, and be priest and victim both, and even this was now demanded of him. He had said that he was willing to be damned, rather than enjoy a heaven from which his fellows were excluded, and he was taken at his word ; and he must not now take another's heaven, but must pass by the open doors of paradise, and take his plunge into hell. Yes, and this must be his determination, even for religion's sake. How all his work would be miserably spoiled, if the town knew that the clergyman who preached self-sacrifice had finished by coveting his neighbour's betrothed wife, because she was beautiful and an heiress. For the Church's sake he must now make a sacrifice more costly than any he had made before. But it was hard. When he believed in her doctrines he could willingly have leaped to the martyr's stake ; but now to give up bliss dearer than life, for the sake, in part, of a religion whose dogmas he could no longer receive, oh, it was hard indeed ! But in a world constituted like this, he thought, was not the very fact

of the utter anguish of the course of renunciation, the best possible proof that this course was the only Right ?

The full orb of that terrible moment was at length rounded, and fell on the past, as a tear on an open grave. The hands, clenched in agony, slowly relaxed ; and when Armstrong raised his eyes there was almost a smile in them.

“ Oh, Mr. Magney, you are ill !” cried Lorissee in real alarm.

“ Yes, perhaps ; but listen, Miss Cellini. If my words seem to lay on you a heavy burden, yet they will not be spoken without deepest sympathy. I, too, have to make my sacrifices, which cost me more than life. I cannot indeed judge for you, but I give you my convictions faithfully. Your spirit will judge for you. Ronald has sinned—beyond the limit of expiation—against your sex, and so against you. But there is nothing sublimer in beauty, nor mightier in transforming power, than a divine forgiveness. The only chance, I suppose, for his redemption from baseness, is your pardon and tender encouragement of him after the knowledge of his sin. The

sacrifice may be terrible to you, but thus you are one with the Christ-life, with the true human life, for this is sacrifice. Do not fear that you will not be strong enough for any duty which you see is enjoined upon you; for in giving up self you put yourself in line with all the spiritual forces that flow through Life, and on which the shams and appearances of human things glitter and fade; and these forces, whose name is God, will sustain you."

Lorisse uttered a low moan. "You bid me make the sacrifice, and I obey you—as God—if I have strength; but I am weak."

It was far too dangerous an interview to be prolonged, Armstrong knew. He rose to go. Ah, those deep eyes of beautiful supplication! His brain reeled. He had to choke down the words of passionate love that even now rose to his lips. He might at least kiss that exquisite hand held out to him? No, that kiss would transform his life—and hers—to heaven; and this world was to be no heaven to them, if they would reach to their highest duty. He must not make the terrible task harder for her.

At last he said, without touch of passion, "Think kindly of me, Miss Cellini, if you hear that my weakened body gives way under the burden of my many trials. When yours are completed, too, maybe we shall meet again. But, till another world, farewell ! God keep you, and comfort you !"

As their hands parted, Lorisette turned away choking with sobs. Armstrong hastily followed Zomille, with the sound of that grief in his soul, —at once a divine consolation, and the bitterest possible aggravation of his misery.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Come madness! come unto me senseless death!
I cannot suffer this! Here, rocky wall,
Scatter these brains, or dull them.”—*Joanna Baillie.*

POOR Helen's fear and agony on being seized by the two men, gagged and bound, were most terrible. Her experience of life had taught her to expect the worst things that could possibly befall her. It was, therefore, some slight alleviation when she found herself borne to the railway-station, where there were other human beings—they would not suffer the perpetration of any dreadful wrong. All would not be leagued against her. Oh that Mr. Magney would come in now! He would recognize her, and deliver her from these fiend-men. But none of those

who looked on her knew her; none pitied her enough to attempt any relief. In such a law-loving, law-keeping country as England, of course the mere fact than an abduction was happening in such a public way was proof that it must legal, and "all right." The kindly face of the guard as the rail-journey was made, seemed like some assurance of mercy to her. Then at last the large house was reached, and as they carried her through the passages, and her eyes caught sight of one of the inmates and a keeper, she knew the dark fate that had befallen her. One slight convulsion passed through her frame, but she knew it was useless to struggle,—at least now, with these straps round her limbs, and so many people near.

It was arranged that she should be placed under the especial care of Mrs. Smike, a tall, raw-boned, immensely-strong woman. And for the night she was conveyed to a room not quite barely furnished, but with a very soft couch, soft padding reaching five feet high round the room, a very softly-constructed bed, and a peculiar set of basins and water-jugs, that looked like

flatted porcelain, but bent readily to any shape, being made of india-rubber. As the woman had shown such strength and fury on her capture, it was advisable to take the precaution of putting her at first into one of the "flexible chambers."

"Non-resistant and resistant does wery well together," Mr. Jim Smike used to say, "both as regards the room and the mad uns, and as regards my wife and me. I lets her have her way, and things goes easy. It's no use me a resistin' her: her bones is too almighty sharp, and hurts your fist more than you hurts her. So I makes myself a sort of non-resistant, and she pummels away at me, when she's a mind, like a mad-woman a-pummelling the injia-rubber; but I am wery soft, and it don't hurt her, and she presently leaves off, and I goes back to my reg'lar shape, like the injia-rubber. I always was wery soft towards the womenfolk. I must have been wery soft indeed when I let Mrs. Smith marry me."

In the railway waiting-room the hand-straps had been changed for handcuffs, and immediately the men lifted the woman inside the gate of

Myrtle House, Smike had unclasped the straps fastening her ankles, so she had walked between the two men through the corridors and up to her room, after Mr. Price had seen her for a few moments. The gag was not removed, however, until she was received into the care of Mrs. Smike. Probably she would have raised hideous shouts, which would have disturbed the peaceful serenity of the Myrtle shades.

As her husband unfastened the gag, Mrs. Smike handed the poor creature a glass of water to rinse out her mouth. "Now, sit down," said Mrs. Smike, in a voice neither musical nor tender, "and as soon as my husband has gone, I will read you the rules and explain things."

"I'm a-going," said Smike, "but you, Mam, as 'll be number twelve, I suppose; we are going to take very good care of you here, and you need not look so miserable-like, if you can help it. Many that we takes care on here are happier than they ever used to be with their wives or families."

"But," said Helen, speaking for the first time, "I am not mad, and it is a cruel wrong to bring me here."



"Well, you don't speak mad-like; and you must be quick to have knowed that we brought you to a asylum; not a public one, though, but 'private and confidential,' as my wife used to put outside her letters when she courted me."

"Jim, have done with your impertinence!"

"Well, as I was a-saying, you don't look mad, only we don't go by appearances here. We does as the parson says, 'judge not according to the appearance, for appearances is wery deceptive.'"

"But when they find out that I am quite sane—"

Smikey sorrowfully shook his head. "None of us here is quite sane. Our patients almost all says they are, but by their words or their deeds they soon prove they ain't."

"I may write to my friends?" The forlorn creature thought of Mr. Magney.

"Oh yes," said Smikey, "but Mr. Price always reads the letters, and I guess don't have 'em all posted."

"But is not there any hope for me?"

"The hope is that you will be quiet and good," said the wife, "and then we shall be very kind to

you, and find you plenty of occupation and amusement, and maybe you'll be happier here than outside in the wicked world."

Tears could not come; their founts were long dried; but Helen's voice was very hoarse as she said, "You have stolen me from my child, too?"

"Ah, that's bad, that's bad," said Smike, really touched; "what a pity you didn't have the child with you! Well, cheer up; perhaps we shall be able to get the child for you."

"How was it that you came there for me?" poor Helen asked. "Whose doing is it?"

"Oh, that we don't know. Some of our papers was from a French place. But now I shall go; you must be wery tired, and want rest. Good night. I hope you'll forgive me, for I ain't the cause of it. I has to do what I am bid, and wery sorry too, sometimes."

"I forgive you," said Helen wearily.

As Smike went down to the servants' supper-room, his mind was busy with thoughts. "She's a sane one, and, by Satan! what a beautiful creature, and what a awful sad face! I wonder whether I could have kidnapped her if I'd knowed.

No, if she'd had the veil off, and talked so sad, I don't think I could have laid a finger on her. Ugh! its a ugly life. I wish I was well out of it. I'm a good mind to get her out to her friends, and then emigrate to New Zealand and leave my wife behind, and sing on board the wessel, 'The gal I left behind me,' with my hankerchief to my eyes for tears of laughter; and that would be a better back-door out of matrimony than the divorce court, eh, Jim Smike? But, I hopes there is one compartment of the parson's place as ain't got any back-door, and that's a little blazing, red-hot madhouse, where all the beds and the seats is made of devil's pitchforks, where some of the people is shut up that sends our patients here, particularly them that sent this wonderful beautiful creature. By Satan, she said, 'I forgive you'!"

When Smike was gone, his wife read over the rules, and gave explanations where traditions had grown up round the old laws, and said finally, "Now, here is one warning I have to give you, don't be trying it on to get out. We shall find it out, and stop you, and punish you.

That's the worst crime in the place, and is not put down in the list of offences because it's too bad to be mentioned; or else because no one ever has got out. No one, never. So don't ever attempt it. You must settle down and be quiet, and pray if you like, and we'll be kind. Good night."

All this was said in tones more severe than usual. There was another crime,—the possession of good looks by a woman,—as unpardonable in Mrs. Smike's eyes as trying to get out of the Myrtle happy-valley, and of this offence the new arrival was undeniably guilty. Poor Helen! She was likely to have little really kind treatment. Mrs. Smike's jealous eye had already noticed the effect of the woman's beauty on her husband, and she walked fiercely along to her room, feeling that she was a poor, injured, insulted wife, with one of the most miserable, and undeservedly miserable, of lives.

Helen quietly stretched herself on the couch. Was it possible that all this misery could have happened in one day? Was it really only last night, or years ago, that she sat in St. Jude's,



and heard Mr. Magney's sermon? She would count up the time: there was the day when she heard that the Mossingfords had returned, and that Ronald was to be married to a lady "beautiful and good;" there was the day when she went to her, and the many days the beautiful lady took care of her,—yes, those days were almost happy; then there was the day when the men seized her, and the long days she was kept in a room where people came and stared at her; then the days and days when all the world was filled with wild rattling noises, and she felt that devils were drawing her with shrieks down black tunnels in the earth to hell; then there came the day when she was brought to this mad-house. Did all that make up years, or only months? Perhaps little Noni was grown up now, and would never know her. He would never like to own for mother a woman who had been to hell, and been mad. But she hoped he was grown up good. And what could have happened to *him*, who had always damned her life, and had now sent her to this place? Yes, he had sent her; the devil even would have pitied her, but

he would not. Was God still on his side? It seemed so, else she would not be here. If God had begun to pity her, he would have saved her in all these years, while she was being dragged to hell and brought here. And where was her mother? Why had she not come to her? She could not. God would not let her. But she might go to her mother; there was nothing to hinder that.

She rose, and as the pale moonbeams fell on the long hair that hung over her shoulders, she fancied that the gold had turned to silver. "Poor hair; it was yellow once, and now it seems quite white. Yes, it is years and years ago, but I did not think so many. Twenty years perhaps, for I was only twenty-two. Twenty years more, and God has not begun to pity me; but perhaps God can't see me in this dark place. And mother can't see me here. God could not even see Christ in the grave, till the angels rolled the stone away. Yes, that is it; and there are mother's eyes gazing for me up in the sky, and she can't see me here. If I could only get up to the window." It was a



long narrow one, built high up near the ceiling; no lunatic could get up to it, and besides there were bars across. With frantic violence, Helen pulled the bed and the couch away from their fastenings to the walls, piled them one on the other, leaped from them, their elasticity aiding the spring, clutched at the bars, raised her knees to the narrow window-ledge, wrenched at the bars frantically, until at length one gave way, threw the outer windows open, squeezed her body through the bars, looked up, "Darling mother, I am coming now; ah, I think God can see me now I have got out of that grave; I think He is smiling on me up in heaven. I come!"

In another instant, wild cries of alarm rang through the night-silence at Myrtle House. The men rushed into the court-yard, and tenderly brought in the blood-bespattered corpse of beautiful Helen.

The strong rough keepers were moved to pity. Smike wept like a child. He tenderly cut off a small piece of the beautiful wavy gold, and then

went to Mr. Price. "I feel as though I was that woman's murderer, Sir. Here's the guinea you gave me; it would burn me to keep it. And I shan't stay in this damnable place another hour. Give me my wages due, and I'll go."

Entreaties of him to remain were useless. "Well, Mr. SMIKE, please remember that we shall always be very glad to see you back here again, and I would even manage to let you be head-keeper, instead of Jones. So I will only say good-bye for a time."

"Wery well, Sir; and till I comes back, my wife can keep to her post just as usual. You can give my love to her, please Sir, and say I had not time to wish her good-bye."

CHAPTER XIX.

“To run away
 From this world's ill, that at the very worst
 Will soon blow o'er, thinking to mend ourselves
 By boldly venturing on a world unknown,
 And plunging headlong in the dark! *'tis mad;*
 No frenzy half so desperate as this.”—*Blair.*

“Willingly to surrender our heavens, proves that we have
 the highest heaven inalienably within our own breast.”—*Old
 Sermon of Armstrong Magney.*

As Ronald Mossingford made his way up to town on the Tuesday morning, he was occupied in making further plans for the disposal of Helen, which either his special providence or hers had now rendered unnecessary. Should he have her conveyed across the Channel at once? or might it, after all, be better to throw himself on

Lorisse's generosity, and confess as much as might be prudent of his sin against Helen? Somehow she might become informed of it. That fanatical clergyman might consider it his duty or interest to tell her; he had dared to threaten this, so it might be better for Ronald to tell himself; he could make the affair look less dark. Not, of course, that he would ever allow it to transpire that he was at all concerned in the present perplexity about Helen, unless, indeed, as playing the part of true knight-errant in freeing her from her captivity. So all things would turn round in his favour again, as they used to be before some malign influence had begun to work against his plans. He wished he could fix upon the mortal representative of that influence, for Ronald did not believe in the stars having any direct power over human affairs. Could the wild preaching of that clergyman be anyhow working in the minds of people against him? How confoundedly difficult some things were to understand or to manage!

Ronald felt that he knew sufficiently well the character of Mr. Price, to render it unneces-

sary for him to disguise his appearance this time, and, indeed, the business might otherwise be better managed. So he proceeded, by a junction, direct to Statham, and before noon was in Mr. Price's private room.

"A day or two ago, a gentleman named Johnson, not quite unknown to me, called on you about recovering to proper care some poor mad creature. As I was coming near, he asked me to call and inquire if your endeavours to find her had proved successful."

Mr. Price was struck with admiration. It was not only profitable, but an honour, to be concerned in business with a gentleman who obliged his friends so considerately.

"The keepers had an unusually good opportunity of bringing her quietly away from some town where they had some reasons to believe they would find her; and so she reached here last night."

"Then will you have the goodness to accept this note for fifty, which Mr. Johnson entrusted me with for any extra incidental expenses."

"Thank you. I am glad we were so fortu-

nate ; but a melancholy accident has happened since—”

“ She has not escaped ?”

“ No, oh no ! The poor mad creature has committed suicide.”

That any mortal should become so dissatisfied with this delightful world as ungratefully and impiously to quit it of his own accord, was surely the strongest possible proof of hopeless insanity.

“ Poor creature !” said Ronald, with a slight start ; “ how sorrowful ! I understood from my friend that in her mad fits she was quite ungovernable in passion.” But to himself, “ Why the devil could not she have done it before, if it was to be done.”

“ I must ask you, then,” Ronald continued, “ for the sorrowful satisfaction of my friend Mr. Johnson, to draw up a statement of this melancholy catastrophe, signed by yourself and proper witnesses, and to append also a statement that she was seized on the warrant of the order from the Mâcon establishment, through one of their agents. As there must be a coroner’s inquest, it

might be disagreeable to my friend that his name should be mentioned."

Mr. Price bowed. How very admirable was this gentleman's delicate consideration for his friend !

"I am sure I shall be doing right in leaving, on Mr. Johnson's account, another fifty, for your expenses at the inquest,"

Mr. Price bowed again. How admirable was this gentleman's delicate consideration for him !

And while the papers were being drawn up would the gentleman like to see the corpse ? It was not distressing to look at. He could then assure his friend, if he needed it, of the unhappy fact that the poor creature was indeed dead.

No ; he would stay till the papers were ready ; then, if Mr. Price would have the goodness to see that no patients or assistants were in the passage leading to the room where the corpse was, he would go and look at it for a moment. He was sorry to cause so much trouble, but his sensibility was so extreme ; he could not bear the sight of these poor inhabitants of mad institutions ; (and the fewer eyes saw him at Myrtle House the better.)

He did not stay more than a moment. Yes, she was dead. The exquisite face looked unearthly in beauty, as it lay in its whiteness with the long wavy gold around it that covered all the death wounds. It might have been a fair sight to the eyes of God who saw the glory and the good that alone was actual in a life that seemed so hopelessly dark ; but it was not a fair sight to this man's eyes.

On receiving the papers Ronald hastened back to Hamerton, his plans less complex and difficult now. First he called at Armstrong's lodgings.

"I have most sorrowful news," said he, taking a seat. "In consequence of another telegram from my agent, I proceeded at once to town, unwilling to believe, except on the assurance of my own eyes, the terrible fact. Here are the papers. She is dead. It appears that ever since last March, when she escaped from the Mâcon establishment, they have been making inquiries about her. A month ago, I think, their agent got some clue, and came over to England. This is the most melancholy result."

"And you will stake your honour, as a

gentleman, that you knew nothing of her removal from here yesterday?" said Armstrong, looking up suddenly from the papers.

"Yes, I do; I make that assertion solemnly before God."

Armstrong leaned back again in his chair. Then he had done rightly that morning in his terrible renunciation. One of the hindrances to the possible marriage of Lorissee with Ronald was now removed in the death of poor Helen. He could not doubt the truth of the depositions; but if he did, he could go up to London and see. So he copied the full address of Myrtle House, and the names of the parties concerned. Armstrong's duty grew clearer and clearer. He was right in yielding up his heaven for this man. Ronald was evidently affected most deeply by this new result of his old shame, and would be moulded more easily than ever under the power of Lorissee's influence.

When Ronald left, Armstrong finally decided on same further steps for his own future. It was now unmistakeably certain that he could no longer stay in Hamerton. To be so near Lorissee,

and yet be true to duty, would require a might of self-control altogether superhuman,—at least he felt so. It might render her duty less easy to Lorissee too. But further, and this of itself was all-sufficient, Armstrong was painfully conscious that he had not now one particle of faith left in the doctrines of the Church whose minister he was. He might have faith again some day, but at present he had none. All the objections to the trustworthiness of the Gospel records, and to the historic veracity of the facts of Christianity, swarmed forth with more than all their old force, and, for the time at least, utterly overwhelmed the counter-assertions and arguments. Indeed, he was not sure that he had the smallest faith left in the evidence of a God at all, or of any good purpose over the world. This last misery of Helen's, and her dark fate, gave an added hue of blackness to the world, which already appeared to him far too evil to be the possible work of an intelligent Being, or Power, at once all-good and all-mighty.

So he made the final sacrifice. He had to give up, not without intolerable anguish, his prospects



in life,—his spiritual work,—his beautiful church, and wider sphere of usefulness,—all his friends,—and heaven,—and love, when it came to his bosom, warm and beautiful and appealing,—and hope, and the Christ whom he adored,—and God, in whom he had lived ;—and there was nothing, nothing left for him, but obscurity and namelessness and friendlessness,—and Duty, and eternal devotion to Right.

CHAPTER XX.

" It's wiser being good than bad ;
 It's safer being meek than fierce ;
 It's fitter being sane than mad.
 My own hope is, a sun will pierce
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched ;
 That after Last returns the First,
 Tho' a wide compass round be fetched ;
 That what began best can't end worst,
 Nor what God blessed once prove accurst."

Robert Browning, ' Apparent Failure.'

So, soon after Mossingford had left, Armstrong rose up. He locked his desk drawers, putting in a number of letters, and sermon-notes, and papers ; carefully packed up the 'Prometheus,' which had been returned from the Hall ; paused a few moments to gather inspiration from its calm passion of endurance, and to remember how Lorisse's eyes flashed as they had talked of the

painting together one day when it was at the Hall ; then he packed a trunk and his knapsack, and gave instructions for them to be sent to the rail cloak-room. Next he called at The Pansies, waiting to pet Polly, while the little wife went hastily to fetch her husband from the church.

“Why, Sir, you are ill !” said Tam tenderly, as he entered.

“I fear I am ; and I have brought ill news.” Then he told them about the seizure of their lodger, her conveyance to the asylum, and of her death. “This affects me deeply, but I have another extreme grief which compels my immediate presence on the Continent. I have called to say good-bye, and to arrange about Mrs. Smith’s child.”

“Don’t trouble about the little fellow an instant, Sir ; you must be so good as to allow us to adopt it, as we did Polly ; and may it bring us half as much good luck !”

“You are a noble fellow, Tam,” said Armstrong, grasping his hand ; “God bless you, and your wife, and the little ones ! Here is a present, Mrs. Jannings,” said he, handing her a

bank-note, "which you may break up for birthday presents for the little creatures."

"Good bye, then, Sir; it will be a great loss to the town till you come back. But I trust you will return to us quite strong again."

"And so does I," said the little woman, "as you're the best friend, Sir, we ever had, as has made all so happy for us as used to live in one room, as I'm sure we don't deserve ever to see you no more, a-goin' on the Continent among the wild Frenches, as would break my heart and husband and little Polly too—" and the good soul sobbed bitterly as Armstrong waved his hand in a final adieu.

He then went on to the Parsonage. The interview with the rector was very painful. Armstrong told him first something of the history and melancholy end of poor Helen, as he would be sure to hear of it presently, carefully passing over all particulars that might have directed Mr. Clayton's thoughts to Ronald Mossingford. Then he told the rector that the special object of his visit was a personal one, and painful beyond expression. He found himself

involved in so many, and such insuperable theological difficulties, that he had decided not to preach again until these became in some sort settled or modified. "I had no intention, when I preached last Sunday evening, that that should be the closing sermon of my ministry here, but I do not know that I should wish to say any otherwise in a farewell sermon."

The rector was most profoundly affected. His voice often failed him for sobs, as he tenderly urged all sorts of arguments on his young friend for a reversal of his decision; the sacrifices he had made to enter the Church—his usefulness—his extraordinary adaptation to the work of the ministry—the larger sphere awaiting him—the increasing light which God had been giving to him, and increasing spiritual power—the certainty that, as he pursued his investigations, all his theological difficulties would clear away, and give place to maturer faith—the help that would come to his own soul in the continued discharge of his duties, even if sometimes they were irksome to his spirit—the danger of a wide departure from the faith if he alienated himself

from his beloved labours and from all his old associations.

Armstrong listened gratefully ; acknowledged the force of these reasons ; but he was ill—sick in body and in soul ; utterly unfit for his pastoral duties, and must go away, at least for a time.

The good rector at last acquiesced. His friend's spiritual darkness was due principally to the exhaustion caused by his too arduous labours. Mr. Clayton blamed himself that he had not insisted on Magney's taking more rest, and working less continuously. He was grieved to observe that he looked almost ill. So he urged him to allow his mind to rest from all painful thoughts until he was quite restored to vigour ; and then, with returning health, his theological difficulties would be gone, and he would return to the people who loved and revered him so deeply with new energy for his work. And by that time his church would be ready for consecration.

Armstrong allowed the dear good rector to anticipate this, as it was evidently grief enough to him to lose his helper, without the



bitterness of knowing that the loss would be final.

Mr. Clayton walked down with Armstrong into the drawing-room. "Dear Mr. Magney is quite ill, my dear," said he, addressing his wife; "he has long been quite overtaxing his powers, and this is the penalty, which is, however, our loss as well as his. I have been urging him to go again to Switzerland, and he promises to go. I trust he will return quite reinvigorated, and Mr. Onslow and I must undertake all his work for him as well as we can until his return. No one will welcome him back with more gladness and thankfulness than shall we."

Tears came involuntarily to the eyes of poor gentle Fanny, as in dismay she listened to all this. Mrs. Clayton, too, appeared grieved, but said she was sure it was best for him to take Mr. Clayton's advice, and get strong again as soon as ever he could.

Armstrong felt it was better to get the interview over now as quickly as possible, and rose to go.

"We are so sorry," said the lovely daughter,

as she tendered Armstrong her hand: and then the soft-hearted little creature burst into tears. Perhaps it was wrong to show such emotion, but she could not help it.

“You all think far more highly of me than I deserve,” said Armstrong. “I shall retain a most grateful recollection of your goodness to me,” he continued, shaking hands with Mr. and Mrs. Clayton. “Farewell.”

“The Lord preserve you, and bring you back to us again in peace.”

Before reaching London, Armstrong made his way, by the junction line, to Statham. If he had any suspicions that Ronald had untruly represented Helen as dead to serve some purpose of his own, he was soon assured to the contrary. Mr. Price conducted him to the room where Helen lay pale in death. The sight of her loveliness, more exquisite than ever as she lay so white in the halo of her wavy gold, and some sense of the torture of spirit which must have driven her to the closing deed, stirred in Armstrong deepest sorrow and pity. “Poor Helen! and so death, your only friend, came at last to



you like that—so terribly, yet so sweetly, kissing away your griefs, and leaving your lips in smiles. How sad, sweet sister, how sad your life, that the best it ever gave you was such a fearful end! Pure, sweet soul, surely there is some grand recompense for you. How thick these infrequent tears flow; and surely God—if God be God—if God be ours, must sorrow too; must sorrow with groans as Christ did by the tomb of Lazarus. Ah, how would I transform all your griefs to smiles, your shame to honour, your death to life! And if God be God, He can and will. Yes, He must; or He would leave His name tarnished and dishonoured for ever in His universe.”

Armstrong knelt down at the side of this beautiful death, as if in prayer; then reverently he put his lips to the cold forehead for an instant. “Sister Helen, farewell. I pray that there is another world, not of shame, but true and good, and that I may meet you there, and find that even here all was somehow well.”

In London Armstrong made some arrangements about the books and packages, which were to be

forwarded to a pantehnicon ; then went into the City, and transferred the amounts entered in his own name in the Funds to the name of James Armstrong, in case he should not care to return to England, or trouble any of his friends again ; wrote a note to his brother Frederick, explaining that a break-down in his health had necessitated a pause in his work ; and then took the express to Dover, and before midnight was crossing the Channel.

How quickly flows life in some periods of our history,—as if to atone for its stagnant course in others. Last night, at this hour, Helen was flinging her soul to God out of the hands of brutal man. The night before that, he had preached his last sermon. How strange that only one day had intervened between that Sunday, the twenty-fourth, and this Tuesday, the twenty-sixth of July, 1864. So he thought, as he looked on the date written on his passage billet. His route was through Paris, by Geneva, to the Oberland.

CHAPTER XXI.

"The mists boil up around the glaciers ; clouds
 Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury,
 Like foam from the roused ocean of deep hell."

Manfred.

"If I be foiled, there is but one shamed that never was gracious ; if killed, but one dead that is willing to be so ; I shall do my friends no wrong, for there is none to lament me ; the world no injury, for in it I have done nothing ; only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better supplied when I have made it empty."

As You Like It.

ON Thursday, with knapsack and alpenstock, Armstrong was already among the Alps. He made direct for the grand peaks and glaciers of the Bernese Oberland, among which he wandered day after day alone, and sometimes half the night. He made no difficult ascents, for he did not wish the presence of guides. It was enough in this time of spiritual darkness, and after failure of all his life's hopes, that he could lose all sight

of man in these grand solitudes, and find the balm of Nature, if, indeed, she had any healing or alleviation for his wounds. At least she had mysterious and mighty sympathies with him. He felt this as she lifted around her jagged peaks, and bared to his eyes the traces of great scars, and deep wounds, and terrific convulsions. Especially he felt this sympathy as, with wild exultation of spirit, he toiled up against the drift of a snow-storm, or the wild battering of hail. His heart would leap within him as he gazed, solitary among the awful mountains, in the midst of wild storms, with the huge black clouds suddenly rolling down the white ice-peaks, and all the peaks resounding with the clanging reverberations of the imminent thunder. Here Nature found a voice grand enough to say out all the raging discord of his soul, and shriek it in the ears of God. It was terrible—blinding—deafening ; but it was rapture.

With startling distinctness, pictures from the past would suddenly frame themselves in the midst of the wild scenes. His beautiful church, with its noble pillars and exquisitely carved

Gothic capitals, and the boss of fern-leaves in the side-aisle near the pulpit, carved with his own hand; The Pansies, with little Polly looking up with bright eyes for a kiss; Monday mornings at the parsonage; the lovely Helen, white in death; and a face of haunting beauty, with deep dreamy eyes, in which slumbered grand fires of enthusiasm. All sorts of dream-like visions mingled in his mind. There was a knight once, who, because he was magnanimous to an enemy who had fallen into his power, was kissed by the good Christ in token of God's approval; but there were no kisses from Christ for Armstrong, and no divine approval of his self-devotion, unless it was the whisper in his conscience that told him that whatever came he had done right. And there was a lady once who had met her chosen knight on turret-stair, but soon had to mourn his absence with a sorrow that love from no other knight could remove. Armstrong wondered whether she was still complaining, "My sorrow none knows but God, and there liveth none shall hear my sorrow."

And then the storm-winds took a fresh tone of infinite sadness, or rose into wild laments of grief.

Towards night-time, after one of these snow-storms, he one day found himself in the little village of Grindelwald. They had a room vacant at the Hôtel de l'Ours, and after a bath he took supper in the public-room. In the course of the evening a discussion arose about the kind of travellers usually found in Switzerland. An Englishman, with manner rather boisterous, affirmed that the American tourists were always travelling with a lot of asses laden with clothes-boxes at the fastest rate possible, just to stay two minutes before each remarkable waterfall or view which they could reach without much fatigue, then hastening on as soon as they had ticked it off as "done;" that the French and Germans were all a set of fops, and contented themselves with smoking cigarettes and flirting at the Bads and Bains—bad and baneful enough—which were everywhere stuck about the Alps for their especial entertainment; and that the English were the only tourists proper, who travelled to admire the beauties of nature, and had pluck enough to make the difficult ascents.

A fine, strongly-made young Frenchman, who

was sitting near, let fall the 'Moniteur' from his hand, and eagerly denied the justice of these statements. He contended that his own was a far braver race than the "slow English," and that if the French had not made so many first ascensions of the Alpine peaks, it was simply because such climbing was so frivolous and useless. "The heights of art, and science, and literature, we climb with devotion, and first gain the grand views; and we may war for some noble idea, but not climb mountains merely for the idea of coming down again."

The dispute became unpleasantly hot, and at last the Frenchman dared any one present to accompany him in an ascent of one of the great peaks near—say the Schreckhorn—which would be difficult enough to try their "pluck" after the recent fall of snow.

No one accepted the challenge, and the Frenchman repeated it, adding, that if after their tall talk, he was not to have the pleasure of their company, he should still go himself if he could find a guide willing, as just now there were no other sort of heights he particularly wanted to climb.

Armstrong had cared nothing about the dispute, indeed had scarcely listened to a word of it, but the whim suddenly took him to make the ascent.

“If you want a companion,” he said to the Frenchman, “I will gladly offer myself, but not as being concerned in your late dispute. Your nation is a grand one, made of fine heroic stuff; your battles on all sorts of fields prove that. It would be better for the world if French and English always united to conquer nature, instead of sometimes taking opposite sides against each other.”

After a little more talk, the expedition to the Schreckhorn was settled. None of the others would join, and only one guide, Michel Dantin, would risk the expedition; nor he, until they had promised a hundred francs if he came down alive, and a thousand for his widow, if not. Preparations were rapidly made, provisions packed, and the three at once retired to rest.

Soon after midnight, Michel roused them; breakfast was taken, and they made the start before one o'clock. It was a grand walk under the

silent stars, as they made their way first towards the Great Scheideck, and then on more directly towards the double peak of the Schreckhorn, which as yet, and for long, appeared only as one. Soon after climbing by the waterfalls that fell on their right, fed by the snows of the Wetterhorn, they paused to rest, and to rope themselves carefully together, before they began passing over the yawning crevasses in the ice-slopes. These at length were passed safely, and then came some dangerous slopes of *névé*. Michel went first, using the larger ice-axe; Armstrong followed, perfecting the steps with a smaller axe; the Frenchman brought up the rear, encumbered only with his alpenstock. Resting on a flat plateau of snow at nine o'clock, they unpacked provisions and made a hearty meal. The cold viands tasted well, and so doubtless did the iced *vin rouge*, but Armstrong preferred taking only cold tea. The snow was very deep and impeded progress, and rendered the further ascent still more wearying and difficult. However, they at length reached the ridge, whose projecting ends are the Lesser and Greater Schreckhörner, and by noon they

gained the summit of the latter. A small pole had been set up there by a larger party a year or two before, and, recovering it from the snow in which it was deeply imbedded, they set it up again, and after emptying a bottle of champagne, and gazing on the magnificent prospect for two minutes with their green eye-shades removed, the little party commenced the descent.

There had not been much talking all the way up,—the toil of the ascent was too severe, and the necessity for watchfulness too constant; but during the rest on the plateau, Armstrong had some conversation with the Frenchman. “Probably we shall make a safe return, but if not? How, if this white snow is to be our shroud?”

“To me,” replied the Frenchman, shrugging shoulders, “no matter! One must die once, and this for me would not be a bad time; and I never liked the fuss of funerals.” And the Frenchman went on to tell Armstrong that a year ago he had married the most loving, lovely woman in the world, and that, after making his life a heaven, his angel wife and cherub babe had gone away, taking with them all the sunshine and hope out of

the world. Now he was taking a pedestrian tour in the Alps, to regain strength of body and balance of mind, and to decide what to do with himself—which was a huge *ennui*. An accident would save him further trouble.

The Frenchman had proved himself a skilful mountaineer, and on his refusal to change his position and go middle instead of last in the descent, neither Armstrong nor Dantin felt the smallest anxiety on his account. Though there was less chance of holding up by the rope the last of the party in the event of his slipping, yet there was less chance of his making a false step, as the track in the snow or ice was made definite by the tread of those who preceded him.

The early part of the descent was effected with great rapidity. They ventured to shoot down many of the snow-slopes by laying themselves almost flat, and then giving a gentle propulsion to their bodies with the heel. But the descent of one or two steep *arêtes* was effected only with extreme care. There they came to the steep frozen inclines of *névé*, and here Dantin and Armstrong cut still more deeply in the frozen

snow the steps by which they had ascended. Several of these slopes were managed with safety, when suddenly the Frenchman—growing too confident to be strictly careful, or stung with some sudden bitter remembrance—slipped on the dreadful incline, struggled forwards with alpenstock trying to regain foothold, but fell heavily on the *névé*; in an instant Armstrong struck his heavy alpenstock deep into the snow, and grasped the tort rope with all his strength, hoping to arrest his companion's fall, but the jerk of his rolling body came too strongly, and Armstrong was instantly thrown down too; the weight of the two men, of course, dragged down the guide, and the three slipped and rolled with horrible rapidity down the slope, utterly failing in all attempts with axe or alpenstock to arrest their course. A slope in the frozen surface made them swerve on one side, and Armstrong fancied he perceived that they were shooting straight towards some dark peaks jutting through the snow. This was their final hope then, and he nerved himself for a great effort. With sudden convulsion of body he threw himself forward,

and grasped hold, in his bleeding hands, of the first of the projecting crags as they reached it—but the impetus of the fall burst his grasp away ; again he made the attempt—successfully—and found himself clinging to crags that rose sheer out of a deep chasm. The ropes still held firm, and doubtless his companions were safe too. On the right the rope passed over the crag, and supported Dantin, who, however, hung in a most perilous position. Armstrong tore off pieces of his coat and padded them under the rope to save it from abrasion, and then reached his hand to assist the trembling guide into a safer position. Then holding his left-hand rope firmly, Armstrong leaned forward to see the position of the Frenchman. Horror ! the rope passed over a sharp edge of the rock, which partly severed it, and in impotent agony Armstrong heard the strands crack one by one, and saw them start broken off, and stand out like a fringe against the gleaming snow of the opposite gorge. When a little more fringe was made, the life of the gallant fellow would be over. Armstrong fancied he heard a muttered *sacré*, and then a low cry

.

Julie! and then the strain on the rope was suddenly relaxed, and a sharp wild cry rose on the air, and then the death silence of the awful solitude reigned again supreme.

After a terrible interval Armstrong turned his attention to the deliverance of himself and guide. After first handing his flask of brandy to Dantin, and then emptying the rest himself, Armstrong prepared for another great effort, and holding firmly the remaining rope, and with feet against the crags, he succeeded in getting higher up to a safer spot, and in dragging up Dantin, who was almost helpless from fear. Then he took the ice-axe, which happily had still remained clenched in the guide's hand, and began cutting deep steps in the direction of their former route. They proceeded with extreme caution, and with the rope unfixed, for here the one could afford no help to the other, but a foot-slip would have destroyed both if linked by the rope. At length the *névé* was passed—soft snow reached—then glacier—then the rough *débris* of the granite, or more properly gneiss,—and how delightful this broken stony descent felt to the

feet after the smooth, deceitful *névé*, where Death had met them !

Night had fallen, when bruised and utterly weary, they re-entered Grindelwald. The guests who happened still to be staying at the *Hôtel de l'Ours* when the expedition had been planned, of course commiserated the fate of the unhappy unknown stranger, as did also every one else. The report soon spread through the place that a fatal accident had occurred on the Schreckhorn ; it was an Englishman—a Frenchman—a Russian who had been killed.

The arrival of Dantin in his little cottage, with a handsome donation beyond the agreed sum, relieved all his wife's perplexity. As he had not returned for so long, the good woman had been trying to strike a balance in her mind between the relative advantages of a husband returning to her, or of the thousand francs if he did not. As the decision was really difficult, she left off praying to the Virgin to keep Michel safe, and had asked our Holy Lady instead to let her have whichever the Virgin thought would be best, as she was not wise enough to tell. But

when Dantin arrived, his wife was really very glad, and threw her arms round him, kissing him, and weeping for joy, and then gave him a hearty supper, and bandaged his wounds while he smoked his big pipe.

A peculiar temptation came to Armstrong the next morning as he lay stretched on a soft couch trying to rest his bruised limbs. No one here knew either him or the French stranger. It was impossible to publish the name of the lost man, for no one knew it; and the Frenchman had given him to understand that he had no friends who would be greatly concerned at any fate that might befall him. And here all memory that the lost man was French would soon pass away, for none knew that, except the guests who had heard the dispute. Why not, then, publish an account of the accident, putting in his name as that of the man dead? It would relieve others from pain and difficulty, which else must arise on his account. He could not resume his ministerial duties; his undecreasing scepticism effectually prevented that. Yet how painful and even

injurious it would be for the good rector, and his friends, and all the people he had influenced to find that he could not resume his position among them because he was no longer sure there was any God or any Gospel. And if it were better that the direct truth should not be told them, then no excuse, no lie, would be a smaller one than to say he was dead, for that was really the truth. He had died when his hopes expired. This man climbing in the Alps was not the earnest, hopeful Christian, Armstrong Magney, but some fool, sceptic, infidel, nameless. It was scarcely possible that the pretty, gentle daughter of the rector had entertained any tender thoughts about him; yet those parting tears were odd, and some slight changes of colour he had occasionally noticed when he had spoken to her, might have such an explanation; no, this was only an absurd suggestion of his vanity: but anyhow his death would be a complete relief from any such fancy, and she would marry Onslow and have some chubby children, and be supremely happy. His mother and Frederick would, of course, grieve, but not so much as they

would if they had to mourn over his religious infidelity, and abandonment of a fair and useful life. And Lorisse—the soul that had looked out from her eyes that morning when he died—loved him,—at least he thought so then. It were marvellous if such a bliss had come to him, to be enshrined in the heart of such a woman. Was it, indeed, possible? Yes, though it seemed like an absurd self-delusion, he was sure of it—sometimes, at least. And he had put before her the terrible duty of remaining true to her engagement with Ronald, in order to raise him from his baseness. Perhaps a life so sacrificed would be harder than his, or even than poor Helen's. Anyhow, if he could lessen the difficulty to her by being as dead, it would be right. So he thought. Yes, be *right*. He would do nothing he felt to be wrong, not to save himself and the world; at least he hoped not. He would not wittingly do evil that good might come, however much apparently human experience had been framed, or permitted, on that principle. But was Armstrong Magney, the devout believer and zealous clergyman, alive or dead? Dead, dead, long ago!



So, in a few days the English papers contained an account of the perilous Alpine ascent, the self-possessed conduct of the Rev. Armstrong Magney, to which the party owed their lives, and his own death through the abrasion of the rope.

CHAPTER XXII.

"No backward path ; ah ! no returning ;
 No second crossing that ripple's flow :
 ' Come to me now, for the west is burning ;
 Come ere it darkens ;'—' Ah, no ! ah, no !"

"Glitters the dew and shines the river,
 Up comes the lily and dries her bell ;
 But two are walking apart for ever,
 And wave their hands for a mute farewell."

Jean Ingelow.

WHEN Ronald Mossingford parted from Armstrong on the Tuesday afternoon, after telling him of Helen's sad fate, he proceeded straight home to the Hall. It annoyed him that again Lorissee excused herself from dinner. In the evening, the kind old family physician, Dr. Chapman, was called in to see Miss Cellini. He quite agreed with her that all she needed was

rest and quiet. The change of air, possibly, affected her constitution, unused as she was to the English climate. He would, however, send her some simple medicines,—which Zomille emptied very carefully at the roots of some hardy laurels in the shrubbery.

Growing very impatient, Ronald the next morning sent up a note, beseeching Lorissee to grant him an interview if she were not really ill, and to suffer him to be of any service to her possible. Zomille carried down to him the following reply :—“ Dear Cousin,—The day before yesterday I saw Helen. She came here and told me her terrible history. I am trying to forgive you, but feel too ill to see you yet.—LORISSEE.”

Ronald was fearfully agitated and enraged. Then the woman who had called here was Helen. Curse her ! What a pity he had not known of her presence in the town before Sunday, that her suicide might have happened more timely ! Now it was likely she had hopelessly deranged all his plans ; it really might be better to fling them all up, and make new ones. If he was to lose this game, the sooner he put his pieces ready to begin

another the better. He would make no oversights in the next. But it was desperately provoking that he should lose through such a small oversight, or, rather, undesigned, perverse combination, and be mated through a pawn. And Lorissee talked about forgiveness! He could not stand much of that; it would not suit him quite to play the part of sinner kneeling at the feet of a saint. And then, how confoundedly cool was the note! She ought to love him a great deal more than that, or than she had ever manifested. He must have an interview with her. He would wait till the doctor's next visit, and then, if she was not really ill, he would insist on an interview. It must be felt between them both that there was no sort of inferiority on his part, or, much as he loved the girl, he should have to forego the joy, and the possible annoyances, which might come from his union with her. After all, she was not exactly his ideal of what he would like his wife to be. His marriage with her would not aid his political ambition so much as many alliances possible to him. And besides, he thought, if she was getting her head full of these confounded



impracticable, fanatical notions, she might seriously impede his plans. As for her fortune that his mother thought so much of,—well, he could do without that; the Mossingford estate had doubled in value since the railway had been opened, and a fresh mortgage might easily be raised to pay for the alterations at the Hall; and, besides, there were other eligible women with fortunes.

Yesterday, when he had told Armstrong that he would do anything for Lorissee, he thought he spoke the truth. He did not know his own nature. Really his devotion to Lorissee had been, in large part, selfish. Devotion to her had fortunately run in line with devotion to his own interests. If ever the two courses diverged, it was likely that the force of his nature would bear him irresistibly along the latter course, and leave the former dry.

That morning Zomille was instructed by her mistress to find her way to The Pansies, and bring Helen back with her, carefully draped to avoid recognition. Lorissee could not think of any better plan for keeping her promise of seeing

Helen again soon. Zomille brought word that the good little woman of the house seemed in great trouble, and said that Mrs. Smith had been taken away to a madhouse, and was dead. Lorissee was deeply distressed, and anxious to know more of this unexpected sorrow. She had terrible suspicions. When, therefore, after Dr. Chapman's visit, another note came from Ronald, requesting an interview in terms almost peremptory, Lorissee at once consented to see him in her study.

As Ronald entered, each felt that a chasm had yawned between them, over which it was not well to try even to reach hands. They must pass on to new ground before they could again stand side by side, and he dare to offer, or she endure to receive, any least demonstration of affection. They sat down with no more recognition than a formal bow.

Ronald broke the awkward silence. "Lorissee, we must understand one another. Of course I bitterly lament the old past; but then it is past, and old, and I am another man now."

"How little changed," thought Lorissee, "if

he has now dared to sacrifice to his interests the poor creature he before sacrificed to his passion !” There are many of us who fancy we are no longer idolaters because we have changed the form of the offering we make to that meanest of all gods, self.

“Surely the old past ought not to come up, and mar our happy present and our future ! I have always wished, Lorissee, to make you happy ; you know I am willing to do anything for that.”

Lorissee had questions to put before the happy understanding could be arrived at between the two, which Ronald seemed to think so easy. “And now poor Helen is gone, and is dead, please tell me the particulars.”

Ronald did not like her quiet, almost severe tone, but he controlled all appearance of annoyance. “Yes, poor creature ; she was seized on the warrant of an agent of the Mâcon institution ; he had long been seeking her. Then in despair the poor thing threw herself from her window, and was dashed to death.”

Tears of indignation as well as of grief were in Lorissee’s eyes as she said, “Then you have to mourn being the cause of her death.”

"How so?" he replied sharply. "Could I help her going mad, or prevent the Mâcon people recovering her? or hinder her folly in destroying herself? I did not know anything of her being seized on the Monday." The weakness of his nature, and difficulties of his position, had made Ronald a casuist.

"Perhaps not, but it was you who must have informed the Mâcon agent where she was. That was why you started so at sight of the poor woman on Sunday night,—I see it all now,—and why you went to town so early on Monday morning."

Henceforth each knew that the gulf between them was fixed and impassable. Ronald paused a moment or two in a struggle with hot passion. Discretion gained the ascendancy.

"I am sorry that you prefer to put the worst construction possible on your cousin's actions. I went to town on Parliamentary business, and knew nothing whatever of Helen's seizure till I received information by telegraph about her, and that I should never have done but for inquiries which the clergyman, what's-his-name, Magney,

was making. Thus much to clear myself. For the rest, it has become quite evident that our dispositions and habits of thought are so different, that it is impossible we can ever be more to each other than cousins."

Lorisse's cheek flushed. She simply bowed as in acquiescence, and left the room.

At the urgent entreaty of Mr. Mossingford, Lorisse consented to stay at the Hall a few days longer, until an uncle, her father's favourite brother, who was then in Paris, could come over to her.

On the next Sunday, at church, she heard with disquietude and sorrow, from the good rector who made the statement in tears at the end of his sermon, that in consequence of sudden illness brought on through his excessive over-work, Mr. Magney had gone away to the Continent for rest and health. So then, possibly, that strange farewell of his on Tuesday was meant literally. But how very much, how very much she would like him to know that it was not through her fault that the terrible self-sacrifice was no longer re-

quired which he had thought was her duty, but which she had dreaded so much.

Then a week or so later came the terrible news of the Schreckhorn accident. She did not know how to believe the report, even when she read it in the papers with her own dimmed eyes. It was too sad. Such a life, so noble, so pure, so full of devotion to the good of the world, thus suddenly ended! A thousand ordinary lives could better have been spared. And perhaps to her, now, all else in the world could better have been spared. She must never dream more of happiness. Such dreams of hers were always interpreted by cruel facts so oppositely. Not till now had the morning mists, on which she had painted bright visions of life, rolled away; but now she could look straight across the flat world, barren, charred, strewn with the dead and dying, and see for her no hope. It only remained for her to become one of nature's sisters of charity, and bind up the wounds of some of these victims in the battle of life, until, dying perhaps of her own wounds, she laid herself down to rest.

When her uncle arrived it was no longer



necessary to consult with him about her future course. She had already determined to return to the old Florentine scenes, and devote herself there as best she might in her weakness, to the help of the suffering and wretched, in the remembrance of Armstrong Magney's devoted spirit, and looking up to the self-sacrificing God whom Magney preached.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"There is a nobler glory, which survives
 Until our being fades, and, solacing
 All human care, accompanies its change,
 Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom—
 —The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
 Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
 Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
 Unaltered will, quenchless desire
 Of universal happiness." *Shelley.*

"If I stoop
 Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
 It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
 Close to my breast; its splendours, soon or late,
 Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day."
Browning, 'Paracelsus.'

ARMSTRONG could not long remain away from the
 thick strife of life. Sick-leave he did not find to
 his taste. A week after the accident he was in
 Geneva, having quite determined to give himself

again to some labour for the good of men. He felt that the cords that bound him to misery ought only draw him closer to his suffering race. Certainly his losses of happiness and hope did not really make for him an isolated place among his fellows, nor must they practically. He could not yet give himself again to the highest work of healing the spiritual maladies of men; he must wait till God showed him more fully the true gospel of goodness. Meanwhile he would devote himself to medicine, to qualify himself for healing the bodily diseases of his fellows.

In the coffee-room of the hotel, his eye caught a line in a newspaper which, naturally enough, startled him. "STRONG, for God's sake write to Fred. I have seen Michel."

Strong emotions seized him. His dubious plan had failed; then, of complete success. His noble, much-loving brother would not credit his death without personal assurance of it, and must have crossed the Continent instantly to ascertain the facts of the case. Well, it was happy to feel that there was this one true brave heart that knew he still lived. Armstrong's sense of utter

solitariness was mitigated. But Frederick must not let them know at Hamerton. So he hastened to telegraph at once to his brother, at his City offices, not to mention the fact of his existence to a soul, except their mother, and to meet him, "James Armstrong," in two days at an hotel in Paris. Armstrong felt certain that his brother would have returned, hopeless of discovering him, without a clue, in the middle of Europe.

In two days the brothers met. Frederick was wild with joy; knew beforehand that Armstrong had gone dead through one of his heroic whims, and when he heard the reason declared at once that instead of thinking any the less of his brother in consequence of his scruples in giving up his religious work, he only admired his courage and integrity the more.

"Upon my soul, Strong," he said, "you are right in your course, and I at least believe God thinks so too. It is most kind and right of you not to disturb the beliefs of those good simple souls down at Hamerton, but I quite see that things don't much look as if there were any

particular gospel for the world ;—though perhaps I ought not to talk much about this, for I am happy enough with Effie, and personally don't want the world much mended. But I quite understand how different all things must look to you, who always care about other people. And I stick to you, Strong, whoever in earth or heaven may be against you. But, however you may be misunderstood, it seems to me that the Lord God must be on your side, since He loves truth and goodness."

Armstrong explained that his reason, in part, for grieving them with news of his death, was to save their mother from the deeper grief which a knowledge of the great change in his religious views would cause her.

"Yes, she would have grieved very much," replied Frederick ; "I dare say she would have said lots of foolish things about wishing rather that you had died in the odour of strong sanctity, than have lived to sacrifice your position and prospects in the Church. But she won't talk like that now, I can swear,—only I won't swear, out of respect to your former cloth. In fact, my dear

fellow, she is so overjoyed that you are still alive, that she quite forgets all the rest."

Frederick urged his brother to take the business affairs again, or at least a large share of the profits. But Armstrong quietly refused. He explained that his intention was to enter one of the Paris hospitals, and commence the study of medicine at once. His small private income would abundantly suffice for all his needs.

"I may be able to render a little service to the world this way," he said; "I do not know how else I could so well. And, Fred, as you may easily guess, the one chief need for myself after this utter break-down of all my plans, is some work difficult enough to employ all my powers at their utmost stretch, to distract my mind from the past."

"And for that your choice is excellent," said Frederick, with his humorous smile. "For after six thousand years the world is still destitute of any fundamental principles in medicine. So you have before you a pretty clear space for laying the foundations of the science, as well as rearing the superstructure. Enough work to

satisfy even your tremendous energy, Strong! And, by Jove, I believe you'll do it, or a splendid stroke of the work."

"You are too generous to me, but not just, my dear fellow, to the profession. A vast amount of careful and necessary work has been done, and the preparations made towards the constitution of medicine as a demonstrated science. If in this vast work I succeed in accomplishing a tenth part so much as many have done, I shall be more than satisfied."

"All right, Strong, only I know you're far more likely to do ten times more, instead of only a tenth. You know I always have been proud of you, and mean to be to the end of the chapter. But I am sorry you decide to stay in Paris."

"But it is best. I have quite decided to avoid, if possible, causing pain to my friends through the change in my sentiments. Here I shall not be known. In London doubtless I should be, and explanations would become necessary, which could not be pleasant, and might be very much the reverse, and harmful too—or apparently so."

When the brothers parted, Armstrong made a special request that the knowledge that he still lived should be kept profoundly secret, at least until he should feel that the necessity for this had passed. His strong affection for the people over whom he had so anxiously watched as pastor, made him extremely solicitous that they should be spared the pain of knowing that not in body, but in faith and hope, he was dead. Perhaps there was a little pride in this too. He would rather that they still loved and revered his name, sainted in death, than that henceforth it should mean to them that of a renegade and misbeliever.

Frederick bore away instructions to send on Armstrong's packages of books from the repository in London where he had left them, and to take especial care with the one case containing the painting of the grand Prometheus.

With characteristic ardour Magney entered upon his new profession. The nights were curtailed to make the long days longer for the great work before him. Yet longer far seemed one hour of thought in the staring white of day,



or in the staring black of sleepless night, or even the pause of a few moments in his work, in retrospect of that vanished past that had been so fair, or in prospect of his future so hopelessly blank. Oftentimes it was very hard for him to live. Yet he deemed it cowardly to shrink out of life's conflict, especially as at least he might bind others' wounds,—the slighter wounds of body, though not of soul. But if the wheels of life had not of themselves rolled on, he had not heart enough often to have given them the smallest stimulus.

His brother had told him one piece of news that affected him deeply, that the engagement had been broken off between Ronald Mossingford and Miss Cellini, and that she had left Hamerton. How all this? he wondered. Had she failed of the high duty he had set before her? Perhaps, indeed, the duty was too hard, the self-surrender too unnatural. The shrinking of her delicate purity from Ronald's defilement was more womanlike and right than the stubborn strength of soul that alone could have enabled her to devote herself to his elevation. At least

Armstrong determined he would think so, in the light of this result. Perhaps her weakness of spirit only made her the more lovely to him. And was it possible that any thought of him could have influenced her in this decision? No; that could not be, he thought. He must dismiss all such absurd notions, born of his empty vanity. From the date of her leaving Hamerton, which his brother had given him approximately, Armstrong knew that it must have been very soon after the Schreckhorn accident. So her departure must have been previously arranged.

“But what need of all this calculation?” thought he. “What smallest proof have I that she cared in the least for me? It was, perhaps, no marvel that I thought so in the excited state of my mind, half-mad if not quite, on giving up the work dearer to me than life, and when a little sympathy seemed to me worth worlds, and as hard to get. At any rate, for present ease’ sake, I will deem the fond delusion to have been excusable then. But I now see it was a delusion most ridiculous. How impossible that a being so rare, so lovely, of her rank and culture, could



have seen anything in me to stir a passion of love, and when, during the short time of our infrequent intercourse, her affections were already and deeply engaged! What a preposterous infatuation, to have imagined it an instant! How fortunate that I kept my absurd passion unspoken in our closing interview; else how her small regard for me would have been turned into utter contempt! And yet, yet, I wish I had dared to speak, since Ronald was not destined to possess the wealth of her love. Ah! for but the faintest smile, the smallest portion of that love, how gladly would I barter my poor all! But such a bliss must remain distant, far beyond all my hopes, though I can never be satisfied with bliss other and lower, but without that love must rest beggared in utter poverty.

“Lest I play the fool outrageously, let me think. Miss Cellini is of noble birth, a rich heiress, and richer far in loveliness and worth of soul. And I,—I am poor, without position, broken in prospects, in hope, in heart; nameless even. And dead! Better to say that! Dead in the present. Dead to a future of darkness.

Dead to the past,—dead in dreams, though, that shoot and smart in the corpse-brain. And quite dead to her,—perhaps even forgotten. What then? Why, even the dead do well enough—better even than breathing men—to put in the castle-moat for the living to pass over to the assault. And so, my life being dead, I may be of the more service against some of the citadels of disease and ignorance.”

But other eyes had likewise seen the advertisement written by Frederick Magney. It was inserted for several days in different German and French papers, and in one of them Lorissee saw it, while staying in Paris with her uncle on their way back to Florence.

He had come over in haste for his niece on her summons, but had easily induced her to stay for a time in the French metropolis, as he said he had some special engagements there, and his family also wished to remain there a few weeks or months longer. One place was much the same to Lorissee as another, so she stayed. M. Cellini privately hoped that the gaieties of Paris would afford a pleasant distraction to his niece,

but in this was quite disappointed. The languor and sadness of his brother's child began indeed to cause him real anxiety.

One day, however, he noticed in Lorissee an unusual excitement.

Since her first information of the accident, Lorissee had constantly looked at the papers, as a number of letters were written about it, some explanatory, some, as she thought, absurdly censorious, as if it were not infinitely better to risk and throw away lives every day, rather than that men should sink into a mean timidity. And yet how utterly extreme seemed to her the loss of this life! Her own, or a hundred such, she thought, would have been a smaller loss to the world. Still it was not a bad death for him to die. He had died grandly, achieving a difficulty, and even at the last saving lives.

"But he is not dead!" she thought, on the instant, as her eye saw the advertisement,—Strong, for God's sake write to Fred. I have seen Michel.

"It is the name of his guide. It is the name of his brother. And I remember Flora called

him the Strong angel, and said his mother and brother always called him thus. I must know about it. I owe him some gratitude, some help if it should be in my power to render it; and I should like him to know that I did not despise his advice; he will think I did; I should like him to know that. But how can I learn anything? I think I will consult my uncle."

It was easy to do this. Signor Cellini was most tenderly kind to Lorissee, and tried to take the place of a father to her.

Lorissee explained with great simplicity the circumstances of the accident, and her conviction about the advertisement, and her own sense of obligation to the young minister.

M. Cellini guessed that this might have had quite as much effect in depressing his niece's spirits as the breaking of her engagement with Ronald.

He expressed carefully his blame of the clergyman's conduct in making the ascent, and quite as carefully noticed how Lorissee's eyes flashed and her cheek flushed as she urged a number of arguments in extenuation and in praise.

But there was great difficulty in obtaining any further information.

"The only plan I can think of," said M. Cellini, "is for me to cross the Channel, and find out the brother's office in London, and endeavour to obtain information there."

"Now, indeed, you are a pet uncle, to be so good, and not to mind taking all that trouble for my silly whim; but indeed, I shall be so glad."

Then fearing she had betrayed too much feeling, she added, "The daughter of my father ought not to allow a debt of gratitude, however trivial, to remain unpaid, especially when the person to whom the debt is due may be in some trial."

"But, darling child," said her uncle tenderly, "does it not bear an ill look that a clergyman should suddenly leave his charge, as you say Mr. Magney did, and run the great risk he did on that ice needle, and be dead, and yet not dead?"

"I feel sure, dear uncle, from what little I saw of Mr. Magney, that he would be entirely incapable of doing anything bad at all; but this

would not preserve him from great trials, and, indeed, I partly think he had some great mental anxieties to drive him away from his church at Hamerton."

The uncle took her hand, and tenderly kissed the girl's cheek. "I love you very much, darling Liss, for my brother's sake, and for your own. Do let me serve you frankly, and you know your confidence with me is sacred. You have felt more for this clergyman than you say?"

Lorisse did not answer, except that not answering gave reply.

"I so hope, my sweet child, he is worthy, or whoever you may ever love."

"Yes, he is worthy," said Lorisse, looking up with eyes overflowing with light. "I am as a mere worm to him. His soul is all pure and grand."

"Darling, does he love you?"

"I do not know," she answered tremblingly; "I once thought so, but his honour would not suffer him to show this, because of Ronald."

"It is better for me to know this, sweet niece, is it not? Now I will act in all this most care-

fully, as if you were one of my own daughters, as indeed you are."

An interview, however, took place between Lorissee and Armstrong before the return of Signor Cellini from London.

Armstrong was crossing the Tuileries Gardens from his hospital, one afternoon, the bright scene all round him in painful contrast with the darkness of his void heart within.

"After all," thought he, "that lie, I fear, was wrong; and yet, at the time, it seemed to me no lie, but the terrible truth, that I was dead. But there was a wildness of despair in me then, that is calmer now. I would not do it now; and yet, now that it is done, I must be careful how it shall be undone, for the sake of my old Hamerton friends. And if Lorissee knew that I still lived! It is strange that I cannot banish the old dream-hope that in her sweet generous soul she had some love for me. And if so, how miserable that lie to my hopes! In part, I acted it to spare her pain; what if it has caused pain to her? So, perhaps, one fault, the lapse of an instant, and a lapse not wilful, but mostly out of my care for

others, may darken all my life,—and hers. Yet this is mere wild dreaming. She has forgotten me. But she is my sweet saint,—in my soul's dreams mine.—

“Dreaming! Has my fancy taken very substance before my eyes? Does some angel copy her fair form, to mock me?”

Sequestered from the gay crowd assembled round the afternoon band in the Tuileries Gardens, under wide-spreading shadows of summer green-boughs, sat Loris, with two of her little cousins. The pretty little creatures daintily moved their heads to the rhythm of the music, and remarked to one another the fashionable costumes; but Loris sat motionless, her cheeks paler than when Armstrong had last seen her, and her deep eyes filled with the soft radiance that sorrow only lights within the soul.

Avoiding the gay throng, Armstrong was passing close by Loris's seat. He started involuntarily, and stood an instant transfixed with awe and devotion. Her eyes, from the sad dream of her spirit, looked up as Armstrong's shadow rested on the ground before her. A

sudden low cry burst from her lips, and she rose up white with surprise.

The music drowned the cry to all beside Armstrong; to him, that sudden utterance of emotion outpassed the sweetness of all music for ever.

He took the hand outreached, and gently placed her trembling form in the chair again, and sat by her side.

"I am so sorry, so utterly sorry, to have occasioned you this sudden shock of surprise, Miss Cellini. I must be to you like a spirit from the world of death, if you heard of the accident."

"It is like life from the dead," replied Lorrise, her sweet voice only the more low from her intense emotion. "But I hoped your life was not lost to the world, and now I am so glad to know it is not."

"You hoped not, Miss Cellini? but how could you guess?"

"I saw the advertisement a few days since, Mr. Magney."

"How good of you to have cared at all! I did not deserve this kind remembrance by you, Miss Cellini."

"But you once acted as a noble friend to me, and I have so hoped that I might be able some day to express to you my gratitude, and besides—"

She paused, unable to speak for some moments. Armstrong dared not interrupt, for her every word was precious beyond estimate.

"I thought you might hear that I had left Hamerton—"

Magney bowed in assent.

"And I feared you might think I had slighted your advice."

"No, I could not so dare to judge you, Miss Cellini. I knew what you did must be best. I have often thought since that perhaps my advice was too hard and severe to be right for you."

"I do not know; I sometimes felt so, for I knew I was so weak. But it was not I who failed to obey what I thought might be the voice of duty and of God, but my cousin himself made my sacrifice impossible. I speak so plainly,—perhaps I ought not, but I feel it is due to a friend who has proved so noble, and whose disesteem I am unwilling to appear to deserve."

"If I had ever rendered you any service worth the mention, the recompense of your kindness in saying this would infinitely outpass it. And now, will you suffer me, Miss Cellini, to explain how I have permitted this report of my death to go uncontradicted? It may seem strange to you."

"Oh yes, please let me know, if it will not give you pain."

"It seems to me worse than ever, now I tell it you, Miss Cellini, for I circulated the rumour myself. I told the lie." It was difficult for him to say this.

"I shall not believe that it seemed to you wrong then, even if it does now," said Lorissee gently.

"It is good of you to think so. And, indeed, it seemed to me the truth; or rather, the truth seemed blacker far. I will try to say it in few words. I found I could no longer be a clergyman—my doubts on the fundamental doctrines of religion had so increased. I dreaded the effect the knowledge of this would have on my people. I was dead in heart, in hope, in faith."

"You, Mr. Magney ! is it possible !" Lorissee spoke very gently, but very sadly.

"I knew this would grieve my friends. It is intolerable to me that it pains you, but I think it is best for me to say it."

"Oh yes, I would rather know. And perhaps you only lose your former view of the meaning of this strange life, to gain a higher and wider view. And if you quite fail, Mr. Magney, you are still with the noblest and purest spirits of all ages, who search God's secret in vain, like my own noble father. But you will not despair ? You do not ?"

"I try not."

"Mr. Magney, I have often despaired of any true good being in reserve for the great masses of mankind, till I have thought that the world that can blossom into such nobility and pureness as my father had, must have a root, and a fruit, in some wonderful good."

"A world glorified by such a flower as this !" thought Armstrong. "Were all as fair, the angels would leave heaven."

"Then you will not go back to Hamerton, Mr. Magney ?"

"No, I dare not; until, at least, God's light shines on my soul, and discovers to me some real gospel for all men. So I am now devoting myself to medical studies here. I have not given up my old ambition, Miss Cellini, of seeking to do some little service to the world." Armstrong tried to smile as he said this.

"I wish I might too," said Lorissee softly; "I want to, and I will try."

"And you will succeed. Even I do not despair, and I am but a poor, nameless student, weakened in hope and strength through my former failure."

He paused a moment; and then continued, in tones whose sadness he could not hide: "I am, indeed, bankrupt in hope, and peace, and strength,—without friends, without prospects; and the chill and gloom of this is the more severe from its contrast with that time when I had a heaven above as mine, and a heaven of rest in my own spirit. And yet, bankrupt and dead, I talk of benefiting the world. But you, Miss Cellini—"

"Tell me what you are thinking, Mr. Magney, please!"



“Why, how much more courage you should have, Miss Cellini;—all the world open to you; friends wherever you care to accept them; the fairest sunshine on your life to make your labours delightful, and to ripen their fruits. I know I shall hear that whatever of good you plan to do, you will succeed in. Certainly I will hope and believe this, and rejoice in it.”

“And yet, Mr. Magney, it is you who are rich, and I poor. You are strong in honour and goodness; so strong, that in your integrity you have dared to give up heaven and all hope, and still stand pure and true; and your mind and will are strong to work some great good for men. But I am utterly weak, and of myself can dare nothing. And the heiress is poor,—poor in friends, for they care not for her, but for what she has; and she has nothing,—no wealth, no possessions: these are not mine,—I did not earn them,—they belong to the world that wants them; and all I may dare do is to try and apply them rightly where they may most do good.”

Her low tones faltered as she spoke; her eyes, full of spiritual beauty, shone an instant on his,



like sweet splendours of an unimagined heaven, and then drooped timidly down, and as she ended tears fell from her bowed head.

The fainting music ceased. Thick shadows fell round them. The gay company passed unseen away. The little cousins looked on the scene with pretty surprise, wondering who this strange gentleman could be, and exchanging occasional glances and whispered words full of deep wisdom.

Armstrong softly lifted one of Lorissee's hands, and held it in his. "If I might devote myself utterly to your service!" The hand was not removed; he pressed it to his lips,—

"If I might dare to tell you, Lorissee, how my soul worships you, how I would fling it away in any death to serve you!"

"You love me, Armstrong?" she said faintly.

"Sweet saint, beyond all speech. I love you, dearest Lorissee, before my own life, my own soul. Oh, Lorissee, this is bliss unspeakable, to tell you, by all my honour I love you, and to dare to dream that you may love me. May I hope this?"



“I do.”

“Sweet, your eyes change the world to me. Heaven comes to me in your smile. You will teach me to hope now for all, and believe that in any utmost extremity an unexpected surprise may transform despair to rapture.”

THE END.

IMPORTANT NEW WORKS

At all Libraries and Booksellers.

IMPRESSIONS of SPAIN. By the Right Hon. Lady HERBERT of LEA. Royal 8vo, with 15 full-paged Illustrations, 21s.

COMPLETION of the LIFE of CHARLES JAMES FOX. By the Right Hon. Earl RUSSELL, K.G. Vol. III., Crown 8vo, 12s.

GLUM-GLUM: a Fairy Romance, for Children Good and Bad, their pretty Aunties, and their sensible Papas. Small 4to, 1s.

"There have been very good Christmas stories written this year, but we know of none which surpasses this unpretending little volume. Full of exquisite fancy, humorous satire, and thoughtful tenderness, it preaches in its small way an admirable Christmas lesson, and carries young and old with it into a veritable fairyland that wants no Doré to illustrate it. It should be read by everybody."—*Standard*.

THE THIRD and CONCLUDING VOLUME of the HISTORY of the AMERICAN WAR. By Lieut.-Colonel FLETCHER, Scots Fusilier Guards. Demy 8vo, 18s.

"Of the many books already written upon the late American war, Col. Fletcher's narrative must be placed in the very foremost rank by virtue of its scrupulous impartiality, its artistic delineation of military movements, its highly suggestive comments, and its clear, fluent, and vigorous style."—*Globe*.

THREE PHASES of CHRISTIAN LOVE. By the Right Hon. Lady HERBERT of LEA. 8vo, 12s.

"Lady Herbert has made a singularly happy selection of examples by which to illustrate the great truth which her work is designed to teach. It would be difficult to conceive a nobler subject for the most thoughtful study than the three lives which the author sets before her readers. Her style is simple, direct, earnest, and refined, and in externals the book does justice to its contents."—*Morning Post*.

"This is an exquisite book, and men and women of all sects and shades of religious faith will thank Lady Herbert for her labour of love."—*Athenæum*.

LIVES of ENGLISH MERCHANT-PRINCES, from the Earliest Time to the Present Day. By H. R. FOX BOURNE. 2 Vols., large post 8vo, with 40 Illustrations, 24s.

"Full of capital anecdotal matter, furnishing new and interesting chapters in the history of England. The author, in his illustrations of English merchants, begins long before the time of Athelstan. Wherever a merchant of note presents himself, Mr. Bourne enters lucidly into his history; and when the reader comes to the end of all he will probably be bewildered by his entertainment, the greatness and meanness, the triumphs and calamities, the splendour and the squalor, the heroism and the rascality, the self-sacrifice and the self-regard, the prudence which is often a mere self-care, the divine charity which is self-abnegation, the colossal fortunes, the crashing bankruptcies—as all passes under his eye he will be as one who sits at a stirring drama, and has hardly breathing time to follow the rapid succession of incidents."—*Athenæum*.

THE INGOLDSBY LEGENDS. A New Illustrated Edition, containing all the Illustrations of Leech, Cruikshank, and Tenniel; with new Illustrations by Du Maurier. Crown 4to, 21s.

Important New Works—continued.

COMPLETION of the HISTORY of ROME to the Fall of the Republic. By Dr. THEODOR MOMMSEN. Translated by Professor DICKSON. Vol. IV., in Two Parts. Crown 8vo, 16s.

ENGLISH ECCENTRICS and ECCENTRICITIES. By JOHN TIMBS, Esq., F.S.A., Author of 'A Century of Anecdote,' 'Club Life of London,' &c. 2 Vols., crown 8vo, 21s.

CHARLES TOWNSHEND, Wit and Statesman. By PERCY FITZGERALD, Esq., M.A., Author of the 'Life of Laurence Sterne.' Large post 8vo, 10s. 6d.

"This is a book that was really wanted. The brilliant, impudent, pushing character of Charles Townshend rendered him quite a political power in his day. Mr. Percy Fitzgerald's book gives a distinct and truthful view of society during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The whole is rendered piquant with anecdotes, *bons mots*, and personal portraits of the leading characters in the political and fashionable worlds."—*Daily News*.

NODDEBO PARSONAGE: a Novel. From the Original Danish, by the Translator of 'The Guardian,' etc. 2 Vols., post 8vo.

THE HEAVENS: an illustrated Handbook of Astronomy. By M. AMÉDÉE GUILLEMIN. Edited by J. NORMAN LOCKYER, Esq., F.R.A.S. Royal 8vo, 225 Illustrations, 21s.

THE CURIOSITIES of CLOCKS and WATCHES from the Earliest Time. By EDWARD J. WOOD, Esq. Crown 8vo, 10s. 6d.

"Compiled with much diligence and judgment: indeed, it is what may be termed an exhaustive book; and the mass of evidence which is here brought together, and the number of facts recorded, are truly astonishing."—*Illustrated News*.

LETTERS from HELL. By a DANISH PASTOR. 2 Vols., post 8vo, 21s.

"The author's conception of hell includes a very strong resemblance to our own world. This is, in fact, the main principle of the book; and the ghastly mimicry of human occupations and passions is described with some literary force."—*Saturday Review*.

OLD TRINITY: a Story of Real Life. By T. MASON JONES. 3 Vols., post-8vo.

SITANA; a Mountain Campaign on the Borders of Afghanistan in 1863. By Colonel JOHN ADYE, C.B., Royal Artillery. Demy 8vo.

Also, on January 25,

LADY ADELAIDE'S OATH: a New Novel. By the Author of 'East Lynne,' 'The Channings,' and 'Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles.' In 3 Vols.

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET, W.
PUBLISHER IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY.





